

PENNY BLOOD

HORROR & CULT ENTERTAINMENT

#11

The OCCULT World of DENNIS WHEATLEY

Author of *The Devil Rides Out* & *To the Devil a Daughter*

The History of
SAVOY BOOKS
and
LORD HORROR



In This Issue:

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Carpenter

Throbbing Gristle/
Psychic TV's
Genesis P-Orridge

Hell Ride
director Larry Bishop

Cinematographer
Gary Graver

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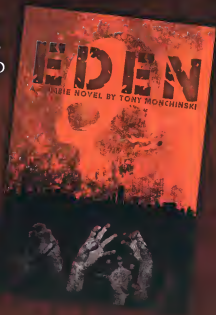
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PENNY BLOOD

Horror in Film and Beyond

Issue 11 ☠ Fall 2008

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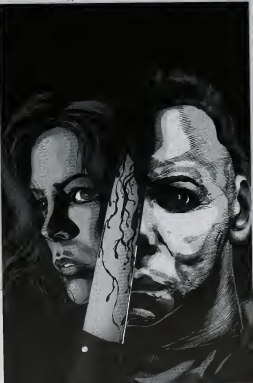
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SPLATTER

NEWS • REVIEWS • FEATURES



Slashed and Drawn:

The New Breed of Horror Comics

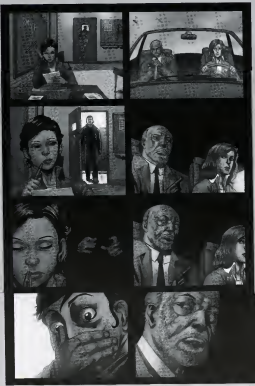
by Marc Shapiro

Stefan Hutchinson on Halloween

Stefan Hutchinson would appear on the surface, to be the classic rags-to-riches story. From starving London writer to creative mind behind the successful *Halloween* comic books from Devils Due Publishing, it all seems too good to be true. But for Hutchinson, a good natured, candid Brit who coincides that he has spent the last five years of his life trying to make *Halloween* a reality, it is far from easy street at this point.

"I did a one shot *Halloween* comic, *Halloween: One Good Scare*, out of my own pocket a few years ago and lost an absolute fortune," he explains with a laugh. "Then I saved all my money from stocking supermarket shelves at night and did a *Halloween* documentary (*Halloween: 25 Years Of Terror* available on Anchor Bay) and went into massive debt to make that happen. At this point, it's probably what you would consider rags to rags."

But they would have to be considered glad rags. For Hutchinson's efforts eventually caught the attention of the *Trancers* film head Malek Akkad, and



Devil's Due Publishing. The result was a four issue *Halloween* comic series entitled *Halloween: Nightdancer* that did very good numbers and opened up the pipeline to this summer's one shot entitled *Sam* which chronicles the final days of Michael Myers's dogged pursuer, Sam Loomis. Looming on the horizon is *Halloween: The 30th Anniversary Special*, a series of short stories based on the characters and events of the landmark first *Halloween* film. And finally, Hutchinson ends the year with a three part comic series *Halloween: The Death Of Laurie Strode*, which takes the titular heroine into the nightmarish events that followed *Halloween II*.

Hutchinson acknowledges the opportunities of playing in a paneled playground not bound by most of the limitations set up by the film series. "Turning the films into comic books has not been so much a challenge as it has been finding what would work. This being a comic book, you can bring back characters that weren't available for the subsequent films and you can switch time periods. With the comics, we've been able to fill in the gaps in the films with stories."

The writer says that he has heard all the horror stories about writers working on licensed projects and offers that, by comparison, he has had it fairly easy. But Hutchinson, who is big on the disturbing elements of horror, says that "in

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trying to make the film company and the comic book company happy there have always been things that they have seen as too much and compromises have been made."

"I tend to use sexuality as a tool to disturb people and that always seems to be a stickler when it comes to the comics. With the comics I'm only allowed to use sexuality to titillate. Sex in the movies was always used to entertain but never to disturb, whereas I've always felt that there was a disturbing sexual undercurrent to the Michael Myers character."

But while the truly unsettling elements of the *Halloween* comics have, for the most part, been reigned in, Hutchinson recalls one incident in Issue No. 2 of *Nightdance* where the horse accidentally got out of the barn. "What hit the censorship fan in Issue 2 was that we had a picture drawn by a six year old child of a spread-eagled woman with bloody slashes all over her. The inference in the story was that it was actually Michael who had drawn it. That didn't go over too well because it was considered too graphic. Now, I tend to write very detailed treatments. The treatment was approved all the way down

the line until the book got to the lettering process. But it was so last minute that the book went to the printers and the printers ended up accidentally printing the picture everybody had problems with, so it got in. I was quite happy it got in and I guess you could say I was vindicated when not one reader complained."

Hutchinson jokingly offers that, "With the comics, you have a lot less people on your back than the poor bastards making the movies. The film company has been very good to deal with when it comes to the comics. It's a blessing that *Halloween* is privately owned. I sit with the head of Transco, we go over the stories and he tells me if he doesn't like something and we sort of lay things out from there. There's never really been a problem with a plot idea. It's when I go too far into disturbing that it tends to be a problem. So I've learned to kind of straddle a line that results in a happy medium."

With the success of the *Halloween* books, Devil's Due has been open to taking the writer's creator-owned pitches. One is what he describes as "a warped twist on Atlantis"





while the other is "an old fashioned monster story," Hutchinson offers that both of these projects are in line with his personal approach to writing horror comics. "Essentially what I'm trying to do is fresh takes on classic ideas. I don't really want to do anything that's close to what's out there now. That would defeat the point of trying to be original."

"Because at the end of the day, if it's different and totally unsettling, that's a horror comic."

Hans Rodionoff On The Lost Boys

Hans Rodionoff has this thing about horror movies and horror comics. First comes the movie, then comes the comic. In 2005 his biographical look at H.P. Lovecraft morphed from a spec script making the rounds to a graphic novel published by DC/Vertigo. In 2006 his script entitled *Menoware*, about a snowboarder vs a memory-feeding creature, was picked up by Vertigo for a 2006, six-issue comic book run.

"And right now we're putting the pieces together for a film version of that which I'm going to direct," declares Rodionoff. "I know it's usually something becomes a comic and then a movie but I seem to be on this reverse track with things."

Rodionoff's run recently continued with his gig writing the screenplay for the long anticipated *Lost Boys* sequel, *Lost Boys: The Tribe*. This resulted in a four issue comic book series, *Lost Boys: Reign Of Frogs*, which is currently ending a four-issue series run for Wildstorm.

"The comic pretty much happened after I turned in the first draft of the screenplay," he reveals. "I felt that in order to have the story of the screenplay make sense, I needed to know what all these characters had been doing in the 20 years since the first movie. So I beat out all the throughlines and timelines for the characters in the script. So in that sense I had pretty much written the comic book before I turned in the first draft of the screenplay. After I turned in the screenplay, I looked back at all the notes, I realized that this would be a pretty cool story to tell on its own to kind of bridge the gap between the two films. I felt that this was something *Lost Boys* fans would like to read."

Rodionoff received Warner Bros. blessing and soon found a willing tank in the DC imprint Wildstorm to create the four issue series for the paneled page. The writer explains that *Lost Boys: Reign Of Frogs* essentially focuses on the first film's heroes Edgar and Alan Frog and what they have been doing in the ensuing 20 years. "The comic jumps around a lot. Obviously Edgar and Alan could not have come through the events of the first film completely normal and the comic delves quite a bit into what kind of people they have become. The same can pretty much be said about Sam, Michael, Star, Grandpa and Lucy. What has happened and what will happen to all these characters was the driving point of the comic series."

However Rodionoff is never far from explaining that *Reign Of Frogs* is the ramp up to the new film. "I look at *Reign Of Frogs* as basically being *Lost Boys 1.5*. It's 90 percent old character and ten percent new characters. The comic book deals with the origin of Shane, the main bad guy in the new film as well as the new characters, Nicole and Chris Emerson. We also do a lot more with characters



that were only referenced in the first film like the Widow Johnson."

The writer's attention to sweating the small stuff and going down roads not previously explored was a freeing experience that he truly savors. "I was absolutely able to get away with more in the comic book than I could with the movie. I didn't have to worry about sets, costumes and budgets. All I had to do was put it in the comic book script and then it was up to the artist to make it happen. With the comics I was able to make things a lot bigger. With the set pieces and the way everything happens, a movie version of this comic would have been quite expensive. But with the comic, everything was played much broader and so I didn't have to worry about how the money was going to be spent."

But despite the benefits of horror on the paneled page, Rodionoff says that there were challenges aplenty in writing the *Lost Boys: Reign Of Frogs* storyline. "It's hard to make a comic book scary. With *Lost Boys*, I did things like fun reveals and building the level of horror as the story progressed. Unfortunately with comics you don't get to play with the pacing. This is a lot more action-oriented than the movies. I was able to throw a couple of cliffhangers into the mini series. In Issue 2 two I made it look like Grandpa was the head vampire and that got people to pick up Issue 3. But when it comes to writing horror comics, it's a matter of making things briefer, more succinct and punchier."

Rodionoff, who cut his horror teeth as writer-director on a \$30,000 wonder called *Sucker: The Vampire* which was ultimately released by Troika Pictures, says he has a specific criterion for writing horror in comic books. "Bottom line, what's going on has to be scary. It has to haunt me; whether it's an image or something in the story. It has to be something that, when I go to sleep at night, it stays with me. When I write horror comics I'm trying to bring up something really disturbing."

Cthulhu is coming!!! Look busy!!!

by William J. Wright

Regent Releasing and first time feature director Daniel Goldack are out to disprove the long-held and mostly justified notion that the works of preeminent horror author and legend H.P. Lovecraft are un-filmable with their take on the grand old man from Providence's iconic mythos of the Elder Gods. Scheduled for a limited theatrical release, *Cthulhu*, starring Jason Cottle (*The Wedding Singer*), Scott Patrick Green, Cara Buono (*The Sopranos*) and former *Beverly Hills, 90210* star turned current reality TV subject Tori Spelling, promises to capture the spirit and the atmosphere of Lovecraft's understated style of "cosmic horror" while, nevertheless, taking considerable liberties with its source material.

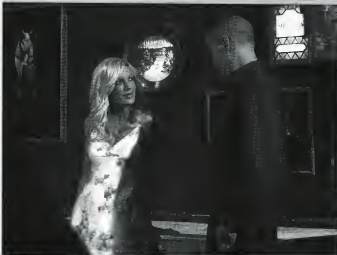
Synopsis from *Cthulhu*'s official press release:

"Russell (Jason Cottle), a young gay history professor currently living in Seattle, is called upon by his sister Dannie (Cara Buono) to execute their late mother's estate. He is reunited with boyhood chum Mike (Scott Patrick Green) and with his father, Reverend Marsh (Dennis Kleinmunn), the charismatic leader of a New Age cult. While exploring his memories, Russ wanders into a warehouse where hundreds of names are listed on the walls. As he sleeps that night, he dreams of a stone cudgel. He awakens to find a cudgel in his motel room. The town drunk warns Russ that it is an instrument of sacrifice, and a young liquor store clerk enlists him to help find her brother, who she believes has been taken by the cult. Russ' Aunt Jane (Nancy Stark), who has been living in an asylum, tells him that his mother left a message hidden in her house which has been sealed by fumigators until auction. Looking for answers in the warehouse, Russ is taken

on an unbelievable journey through the small town's ancient, subterranean origins. When he escapes, he and Mike share a long-awaited tryst, after which they find the girl's brother murdered. Russ begins to believe preparations are underway for a mass sacrifice, and engages the attentions of sexy seductress Susan (Tori Spelling) in order to obtain information. After Susan rapes him and he is arrested for murder on the eve of the May Festival, the stakes are raised—maybe higher than the world has ever known."

Cthulhu has so far received considerable praise on the convention and festival circuit and mostly positive advance reviews on several genre websites. As to whether the hardcore Lovecraft fanbase will warm up to this particular interpretation of the mythos remains to be seen. However, no less an authority than foremost Lovecraft scholar and literary critic S.T. Joshi (*H.P. Lovecraft and Lovecraft Criticism; An Annotated Bibliography, H.P. Lovecraft: A Life*) has proclaimed the film "... the best Lovecraft adaptation I have seen to date."

Official website: www.cthulhu-themovie.com



Digging Graves: Brian Pulido and Randy Blythe

By Christian Lipinski

in at college across the country. But stopping off to sight see in a creepy, mining town soon becomes a nightmarish diversion for the ladies.

"They go on the road to check out kitschy roadside attractions. They head out, and long story short, they wind up in an abandoned mine town that happens to have many secrets and many horrific things happening in it," Pulido summarizes. "So the question of the story is... can they make it out?"

Although well grounded and quite comfortable in comics, the fact that Pulido, who wrote and directed *The Graves*, would venture into film isn't that surprising really. "Interestingly enough," he says, "I always have to say movies are my first love. Comics became this wonderful seventeen year fork in the road, but I've always been a movie guy." He became enamored with the genre upon viewing the original *Night of the Living Dead* at a drive in theater as a small child. "When I decided to make a movie, I knew it was definitely going to be a horror film."

Randy Blythe, a self-proclaimed "comic book geek," met Pulido through a mutual friend. Once the comic king began attending Lamb of God shows, the two

realized shared interests and it wasn't long before Blythe got wind of Pulido's movie plans.

He jovially recalls the scenario. "So the next time we were playing in Arizona, Brian came down; I gave him a couple beers and put the screws to him, saying, 'hey man, you're making a horror movie, got any room for an extra?' The part Pulido had in mind, however, was a little too much for the unseasoned actor. "I had never really acted before, and my skills weren't up to snuff," he admits with a laugh. "Bill Moseley actually got that role... he's got just a little more experience!"

The role Randy Blythe did get was apparently an excellent fit — that of Reverend Abraham's (Tony Todd) right hand man. "The character named Luke is pure aggression — which is what I am when on stage," Blythe explained. "He intimidates and keeps townspeople in line. I'm Tony Todd's bitch in the movie! I got to deal with a really cool special fx guy and there's a knife involved, so there was just blood everywhere. When I got done I looked like the cover of the Samhain record *Insatium*."

Still, friend or no friend, the enigmatic singer had to audition for the part. Pulido and the Ronalds Brothers (producers) saw to it all the actors, with the exception of only a select few, had to read for their roles — Randy being no exception.

"They didn't give me a part because I'm Randy from Lamb of God. I tried out for that, did a few video interviews, sent some tapes, and then went to Arizona to try out in front of the producers." The producers were pleased with what they saw, and Blythe says he was fortunate to have some rare downtime from the Virginia based band's workhorse schedule when his scenes were to be filmed in Arizona.

In fact, outside of Randy Blythe, Brian Pulido did not personally know any of the actors who came on board. "When the script was in good shape, we handed it out to the agents of those folks, they read it and liked what they saw. I guess what really attracted them was the script."

The cast he solidified was a welcomed little



Evil Ernie, Lady Death... these are some of the infamous comic book titles to come from the creatively twisted mind of Brian Pulido. Wildly popular since the nineties, these series helped change the genre's playing field. Horror-themed stories from his past (*Chaos Comics*) and present (*Coffin Comics*) are what the writer is best known for, yet he'll be the first to say that's not his primary love.

D. Randall Blythe is recognized for his otherworldly growls and intense on-stage presence, serving as frontman for contemporary heavy metal's much regarded, multi-platinum group — Lamb of God. So what do the scribe and the thrasher have in common? A suspenseful trip down terror-lane called *The Graves*.

Filmed on location in Arizona (much of it at an abandoned, and allegedly haunted mine), *The Graves* centers around two sisters, played by Claire Grant and Jillian Murray, out for a final hoorah before one settles



who's-who of horror and cult films. Most prominently of the lot were actors Tony Todd (Candyman), Bill Mosley (House of 1000 Corpses), and Amanda Wyss (Nightmare on Elm Street).

"I think one of my jobs was to make every moment as real and authentic from every angle, and acting being most important, and the sound and sets working in concert together to tell the story," Pulido says of his directing duties. "The actors were tremendous. My job was to support them and let them know they could pull it off. Largely though, the instinct of the actors was awesome."

Once everything was in place, Pulido and company conducted principal photography for about three weeks in May, with the second unit on duty for a couple more days thereafter. But during that schedule, business wasn't always "as usual" for the cast and crew. "We were in the middle of nowhere, so to function as a unit,

we had to bring our own town in there—tents, food and water. But there was no escaping the scorpions, tarantulas, snakes and really weird weather conditions. Normally in Arizona, it's clear skies and 90 degrees. But we had rain, hail and 101 degree days."

Acts of God and slithering creatures weren't all they had to contend with. "It's definitely known for being haunted," Pulido says of the filming location. "We shot on location at Vulture City Mine—a real life abandoned mine town. I didn't experience any of the ghostly stuff, but a lot of people on set did."

Blythe says he was well aware of otherworldly goings-on. "A bunch of cast and crew got freaked out. There was tapping on shoulders with nobody there. Then there was some dude who wandered onto the set with a gun!"

Nevertheless, the entire cast and crew managed to wrap shooting while remaining sane and intact. Pulido said the fall season would involve a film festival run and distributor shopping. The release date couldn't be confirmed, but the hope is to see *The Graves* released theatrically no later than early 2009, (incidentally, also the time frame for *Lamb of God*'s next album release.) "After that," he reveals, "I'll go into my next movie, which is my own slant on the zombie genre."



Now Column

MONKEY VS ROBOT

By Barry Meyer

The Summer of 1977... That was the summer when everything changed. After those few sunny, splendid months movies had changed forever. Marketing changed. Even the movie goers changed—a whole new generation of fanatics were born, sprang from the fertile imagination of George Lucas. A generation of fans so enthusiastic, so rabid that they would one day, and forever after, alter the way movies were brought to the screen (or not brought to the screen). That was the summer of *Star Wars*. And it was the worst thing that happened to me.

I can't say that I hated *Star Wars*, 'cause I didn't, really. It's more a kill-the-messenger kinda thing. After that first outer space cowboy chase, or that iconic buzzword of the light saber O, I could see that filmmaking would become something different, pushing style over substance. I saw the writing on the wall... or rather, the writing on the

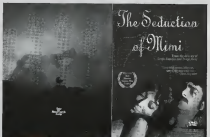
screen, scrolling off into space.

I may have been just a 14-year-old kid from upstate NY, with only a couple short hairs in the armpit worth of life experience, but the one thing I definitely did know about was the movies. I watched them since I was a squirrel nut. Every day I was in front of the boob tube, watching something or other. I read about the movies, too. I may not have seen all the movies that I knew about, but I read about them. I knew every big name from Lillian Gish to Bogart to Burt Reynolds. I even knew who the producers and directors were, and

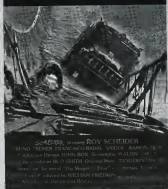


some of the writers, too. Oscar night was up there with Christmas and Halloween on my list of days that I would enjoy the hell out of.

The movies that made an impact on my youth weren't the usual kid fare, either. Screw Disney. The hell with *Beetlejuice*. *Wizard of Oz* was fine and good, but what really tweaked me was a clandestine viewing (on the Starz channel at some family friends' house) of *Rosemary's Baby* and *Lina Wertmüller's The Seduction of Mimi*. Those were the kinds of movies I could really enjoy, with rich, deeply etched characters, and stories that seemed to unfold around you. I really did love movies. And, with all the hyperbole



SORCERER



that it comes within a degree of horizontal, threatening to spill over into the river. The entire event takes only several minutes of screen time, but gauging by the amount of sweat that's soaked into the fabric of your theater seat, it feels like hours.

Had this scene been created by a team of tech-heads with computers, instead of on location, the impact, the suspense would've never been as palpable. The beauty of it is that it's all real — the truck, the bridge, the water, the motion, the peril. There's no CGI here, the action is controlled by stunt men, it's corporal. It's organic. A drop of sweat and fear, because the director knows your eyes, not in some dimension.

It's this notion on the bridge that would subscribe my aversion to CGI or other big bang effects. The fact is, that stuff doesn't move me. I can't get revved up watching a pair of motorcycle dimms, speeding down a digital city street, bumping each other off the road. I don't get blown away when Bruce Willis ducks down as two cars narrowly miss him, flying over his head in perfect sync; and landing just inches away, because, to me, there's no real danger. The more real they make it look, the less real it seems. I know those actors are sitting in a green screen studio, bopping around on their prop cyclopes or running around giant mounds of green falajio covered obstacles. And that don't excite me.

Hell, I'm a student of the Eve Knievel class of bone-breaking stunts. So, knowing that they've spent three months digitally maneuvering the hairs on a green ogre's head to flop and flow like real natural hair—that isn't filmmaking to me. You think Friedkin stopped camera because he noticed that Scheder's thinning hair wasn't flaring about properly? When did spending millions of dollars, and gallons of soy lattes, on getting the topography of the ocean floor extracurricularly perfect, so much so that it looks exactly like the real thing, become a part of story-telling? How did the exact replication of our daily minutia become filmmaking?

I know I'm being a royal buzzkill, but, for me, I go for the old school. I like the dunky effects designed by craftsmen—they're real, they're there. They serve the actors' needs; cause they have to react to them. CGI has it's uses, no doubt, but when the emphasis centers on how the movie looks, instead of how it feels, the suspension of disbelief is about as stable as a suspended bridge with a five hundred ton truck on it. The more real they make the images, the less real it becomes. It's the imagination in a film that makes it real.

Oh, I did eventually see *Star Wars*, and I gotta say it was one of the most memorable nights of my life. Seriously! I remember it vividly, 'cause I saw it in NYC with my oldest brother, on the very night that Son of Sam was caught: August 10, 1977. That occasion actually meant more to me than the movie did—I mean, that's just me.

soundtrack by Tangerine Dream). I was already a fan of Roy Scheider and his shark-baiting, good-guy tough-guy, but genius! that insane scene with the lunatic truck trying to make its way over a ramshackle rope bridge, as a driving rain storm rocks it from side to side — as the kids like to say these days... OMFG.

Let me try and capture the excitement for you. We're deep in the jungles of South America, the skies have opened up like it was the day Noah built his arc, and a band of fugitives are maneuvering through the trees in a fifty ton truck, carrying cases of volatile TNT which, if jostled just enough, could blow them all to China in tiny bits. They've already lost one truck off a cliff-side dirt road, and endured everything from murderous bandits to fallen trees. Now they've come upon a most insurmountable obstacle: a dilapidated, narrow rope bridge. The choice is there's no choice — they need to cross the river. So, Scheider takes the wheel, steering the five hundred ton behemoth over splintering boards and frayed rope. The temptation would be to gun it, but that would mean certain death. Shrewdly, and begrudgingly, he crosses slowly, inch by excruciating inch. Co-bort Paco Raba has the treacherous task of guiding him, placing himself precariously on the wavering overpass. The truck trudges along, splintering boards, the wheels turning with painful precession, compensating for wind and fear. The monsoon winds are so perilous that the truck doesn't sway so much as swings wildly, so widely

surrounding *Star Wars* — the merchandising, the behind-the-scenes stories — I can remember recognizing that the movies that I enjoyed, the stories and characters, were all in danger of being blown out of the universe like a Death Star.

What really drove this point home for me was the conundrum of another movie that came out that same summer, William Friedkin's *Sorcerer*.

You couldn't find two movies more opposite each other than these two. They were like chicken wings and caviar—not even on the same menu. One was from the new kid on the block, unproven, but bold; the other from the old guard, trusted and respected. And what was most telling, at the time, was the treatment of these two directors, and their films. Lucas couldn't have been more loved if Santa Claus himself made him newly in charge of Christmas. He seemed to have the magic marketing touch, which pleased studio suits and the consumers nicely. Friedkin, on the other hand, a multi-Oscar winner, fresh off the success (and controversy) of *The Exorcist* and *The French Connection*, an auteur filmmaker, heavily invested in the industry, couldn't catch a break. He'd thrilled people with his notorious car chases through the streets of NYC, and passed people off with his blasphemous religious horror flick (to which they still seemed to swarm to), but with *Sorcerer*, everyone seemed to completely stay away.

So, while every other kid across the country — and many a man-child, too — were crawling out of their Star Wars bed sheets to go to their umpteenth viewings of Princess Leia's cinnamon rolls, I was, myself, frequenting the local bijou. I saw *Sorcerer* three times during the one week run at the Westmar Cinema, and I was mesmerized (and that may have been due to the hypnotic



Lords of Horror

The Trials and Triumphs of Savoy Books by Quentin Dunne

Jack Nicholson once commented regarding the responsibility of an artist, "You've got to keep attacking the audience and its values." If this is true, no one can accuse Manchester, England-based publishing house Savoy Books, of shirking its responsibility. Indeed, Franz Kafka's quote, "I believe that we should only read those books that bite and sting us. If a book does not rouse us with a blow then why read it?" is featured on Savoy's website, and with good reason.

No contemporary publishing house has done what Savoy has over the last several decades, creating and distributing some of the most idiosyncratic, iconoclastic, confrontational, and downright Dionysian art and literature imaginable. While the term "edgy," as applied to the arts, has become a kind of coveted marketing tool which carries an implicit message that if you enjoy a work deemed "edgy" by critics, you have a certain hip quality, the adjective becomes even more quaint, almost antique, in relation to Savoy's material, the most extreme of which, such as its *What if Hitler had won?* inspired *Lord Horror* series, conjures up a nightmarish netherworld which has long ago transcended the edge.

BEGINNINGS

The spiritual genesis of Savoy Books began long before any of its founders were born. From January to December 1896, Leonard Smithers published *The Savoy*, a magazine with progressive sensibilities and some impressive contributors, including W. B. Yeats and George Bernard Shaw.

In addition to his publishing activities, Smithers was a bookseller with a professional taste for erotica and a personal taste for the erotic. His friend Oscar Wilde once said of him, "He loves first editions, especially of women: little girls are his passion. He is the most learned erotomaniac in Europe." His fondness of the flesh found other expressions as well. Among the items he sold were books bound in human flesh. Small wonder that nearly a century later, a pair of ambitious young Brits ready to make sure uncompromising literature was available to those who were interested would reprise the magazine's name. And while Smithers and company may have provided inspiration to the duo, their hungry and rebellious natures were all

their own.

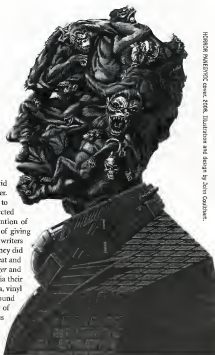
In 1976, Michael Butterworth and David Britton founded Savoy Books in Manchester. Originally, the company's mission was to publish out-of-print or otherwise neglected genre literature and bring it to the attention of the British public. Moved by the idea of giving quality re-releases to the work of such writers as Henry Treece and Jack Trevor Story, they did just that, successfully bringing such oftbeat and imaginative works as *The Golden Stranger* and *Screwape Lettance* to the public at large via their area retail outlets. They also sold erotica, vinyl bootlegs, comic books, and underground zines, offering both quantity and quality of material for those with more adventurous tastes.

But if Savoy was a labor of love by two men who truly believed in the power of art, it was soon apparent their labor was not loved by all. In November of 1980, what would eventually turn out to be only the opening salvo in an epic struggle with the Manchester authorities and its legal system began when the Savoy offices and its retail outlets were raided and thousands of pounds of material seized on the grounds that, under Section Two of the Obscene Publications Act, Savoy was selling, well, obscene publications. Novels such as Samuel R. Delany's *The Tides of Lust* and Charles Platt's *The Gas* were confiscated and seven softcore paperback novels, including Kenneth Harding's *Something for the Boys* and *Cruel Laps* by Marcus Van Heller, were the focus of the prosecution. To add insult and more injury to injury, the boys at Savoy had just signed to be the U. K. publisher of *Cines of the Red Night*, the most recent book by one of their heroes, William S. Burroughs. The legal costs brought on by the raid and more like it, however, drained Savoy's financial resources and the deal with Burroughs never came to fruition. Britton, meanwhile, was found guilty under Section Two and sentenced to 28 days in prison, of which he served 19.

Leading the charge against Savoy was James Anderson, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police. Anderson was a vocal, some would say vociferous, Christian whose arch-conservative views on homosexuals and AIDS (he advocated

criminalizing homosexuality and declared those with AIDS were, "swirling in a cesspit of their own making") earned him the nickname, "God's Coppe." Yet, if Anderson was occasionally mocked, he still wielded great power and for many years he was Javert to Savoy's Jean Valjean. He raided their shops and confiscated their material more than a few times (including once on the very day Britton was released from his prison sentence), and dragged them through the courts, forcing them to spend great amounts of time and money in defense of their right to publish and sell their material. Whatever self-doubt he may have had about hounding the company was likely vanquished by his professed belief that he was an instrument of God's divine will.

Curiously, though, it's possible this very push-and-pull between artist and censor, a certain sadomasochistic dance if you will, may have led Savoy to produce more inspired work than if they had simply been left alone. Does Butterworth agree? "Absolutely. While fighting the court cases, I became conscious of the notion that I was part of a battle that is continuous through time. I just happened to find myself in the driving seat, that's all. It's a battle of the freedom of the individual against the repressive nature of societies. Such struggle is probably necessary, because like all wars, it's a process that forces invention, and





these 'objections' on one side, invite them into the Savoy office, and they meet us as people, they leave with a different regard to the work."

Butterworth is aware, though, of a small turning of the tides. "After Keith Seward's perceptive reading and understanding of *Motherfuckers*, and the subsequent tribute he penned to the Lord Horror cycle in *Horror Panegyric*, our characters have been given a new lease on life. Suddenly, we are being taken seriously by a smarter set. Now, that's scary!"

John Coolthart is a self-taught artist and illustrator (who's quick to humbly point out that "self-taught" shouldn't carry quite the mystique it does, and credits his mother's art school training as a benefit to his own development) who started as a fan of Savoy's output, and ended up becoming one of the key members of the team itself, eventually collaborating on, among other works, the Lord Horror *Reverbstorm* comic series with Britton. He has found the collaborative nature at Savoy highly rewarding. "The collaboration mainly involved discussing things as we went along. Dave and Mike set the ball rolling with a cast of characters and a vague scenario, then we went on from there. Every now and then, I'd ask for some lines of dialogue and once a page was drawn we'd have our weekly meeting to talk about it. The series grew organically as a piece of improvisation, something which is anathema to the mainstream comics world, which prefers to have every last detail scripted beforehand. I don't believe the series would have attained the wildness and weirdness it does if we'd tried to plan everything out at the beginning."

And why the decision to illustrate *Reverbstorm* in black-and-white? "Color isn't always an advantage, and can be a distraction if not artfully applied. I admire Burne Hogarth's artwork a great deal, but prefer to see his work in black-and-white — as in his *Jungle Tales of Tarzan* collection — than in color. Black-and-white gives more emphasis to line-work, detail, and masses of light and shade. It's also far more suited to the creation of a mood. My own comics

drawing has given a lot of emphasis to shading, something which is made redundant when the pages are colored. Shading gives a drawing texture which color often has difficulty matching."

Coolthart clearly relishes the freedom his work with Savoy has allowed him. "Dave's written works had already established a precedent for me. There's historical material in there, and characters based on real people, but the whole is presented as a phantasmagoria. I can't imagine anything being cut for reasons of being too much since 'too much' was the point. As The Cramps would say, 'How far can too far go?' *Reverbstorm* spins off from intellectual concepts such as James Joyce's line in *Ulysses* about, 'the nightmare of history' that twists into something which contains the history but which is presented as a nightmare. Joyce did this himself in the 'Nighttown' chapter of *Ulysses*, which depicts a journey through Dublin's brothels as a Boschian nightmare full of bizarre transformations, even going so far as to include the end of the world. Joyce was well aware that strict realism wasn't always the best way to deal with reality."

Coolthart's artistic influences are not limited to the work of other artists he admires, but encompass music — he has created album covers for several bands — and architecture, the latter of which holds particular interest for him. So much so that sometimes simply looking through a book of pictures of buildings old and new can provide a muse.

Of his political leanings, Coolthart says, "I've always described myself as an anarchist. I'm not interested in the party politics of left or right."

Britton does not give many interviews, but the people who are most familiar with him and his work have some words to offer.

Says Butterworth of his long-time friend and collaborator, "David says he owes sixty percent of his emotional drive in his writing to first generation 1950's American rock n' roll. The obvious practitioners, Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard, together with the more obscure Larry Williams and Charlie Feathers, in particular supply the pounding prose of *Motherfuckers*. Then, later on, the whole 1960's scene. He considers the heart of what he does comes from Captain Beefheart and Frank Zappa and Michael Moorcock's 'New Wave' of science fiction magazine, *New Worlds*. This 'feel' of rock n' roll has to be in the writers we publish. Lord Horror himself came from us working with P. J. Proby, from whom David says he had a first-hand stink of genuine rock n' roll rebellion. He sees Proby as the missing link between Gene Vincent and Johnny Rotten. He doesn't think it's probably wise to go much past the 60's musically because very little has touched him in the way that those early rock n' rollers did. If pushed, he would say that Niggaz With Attitude, particularly the album *Straight Outta Compton*, or something by The White Stripes, would be an aroma that he would like a reader to experience when they open one of his books."

Offers writer Keith Seward, "As a writer, David Britton has more balls than anyone else alive — and he has proven this by going to jail not once but twice on behalf of the written word."

LORD HORROR

The character who would become most popularly (a word simultaneously proper and ironic here) associated with Savoy's literary output was Lord Horror. Curiously, for a figure who rumpages across the pages of Britton's novels and adult comics, Lord Horror was first introduced to the public in 1986 as, of all things, a vocalist on a 12" single distributed by Savoy. Of course, Savoy being Savoy, the song was a savage and slashing cover of New Order's "Blue Monday," one seemingly designed to perplex listeners as much as to please them. And, oh yes, the single was credited to the Savoy Hitler Youth Band.

The following year, an image would be added to the voice. Another 12" single was released, this time a cover of Iggy Pop's "Raw Power," with the back of the sleeve serving to introduce Lord Horror, via Kris Guidio's rendering.

With Britton as the guiding creative force and valuable contributions by editor Butterworth and artists such as Kris Guidio, Lord Horror would erupt two years later with the publication of *Lord Horror*, a work of singular force and vision whose eponymous title would be the first and last traditional thing about it.

Although the mixture of imagination, daring, and pitch black satire intrinsic to the Lord Horror character might make it seem as if it spring full-blown from the fever dream of an especially, ahem, colorful dreamer, the character does, in fact, have its roots in a historical figure. William Joyce (who would eventually come to be known as Lord Haw Hare) was a New York-born and Ireland-reared Catholic who eventually settled in England and joined the British Union of Fascists, where he served as director of propaganda and, later, deputy leader.

Joyce moved to Germany in 1939 and became a naturalized citizen one year later. He soon became the most (in)famous Nazi propaganda broadcaster on the *Germany Calling* radio program due to his vivid and vitriolic advocacy of fascism, which included taunting England to surrender before facing inevitable and humiliating defeat. Defeat, though, would eventually come to Joyce himself, when he was captured by British forces then tried and convicted of high treason. Upon his death by hanging, at age 39, he remained unrepentant, even defiant, stating he was proud to die for his ideals. His execution was the subject of controversy, as he was, after all, an American citizen convicted of treason under the British flag.

In the hands of many writers seeking to portray Joyce, he might have emerged as a tragically flawed man whose better self was warped through the sinister but seductive allure of Nazism. But Britton was not like many writers, and he found in Joyce a vehicle with which to dig into the darkest, dirtiest, and deadliest corners of the human psyche, one which has led to Nazism in particular and centuries of genocide in general, and to do so with a go-for-broke vision. If, as Blake said, the path of excess leads to the palace of wisdom, Britton seemed ready to reach for wisdom with both hands, wring its neck, and then find what lay beyond wisdom's broken corpse.

During Joyce's broadcasts, he had been pejoratively dubbed Lord Haw Haw by a British radio critic. Signaling their intentions from the get-go, Britton and Butterworth changed the nickname to Lord Horror, and a creation destined to both acclaim (by some) and condemnation (by many) was born.

Upon publication of *Lord Horror* in May of 1989, Savoy's old nemesis Constable Anderson was back and ready for battle. Some prominent figures rallied to Savoy's defense. Acclaimed horror fiction writer Ramsey Campbell proclaimed, "*Lord Horror* makes most horror fiction look tame and safe. Awesomely grotesque, unstopably imaginative, hideously funny, it's a truly dangerous work." Meanwhile Douglas E. Winter chimed in, "I found neither nasty nonsense nor pornography, but the blackest, if not bleakest, of comedies, written firmly in the Swiftian tradition.... *Lord Horror* indulged in what so-called 'right-thinking' people consider the most grievous of sins: to turn all notions of moral fiction on their head... and then laugh."

Unfortunately, plenty of those 'right-thinking' people set about making Savoy atone for what they considered its grievous sins. Michael Winner, director of the Charles Bronson *Death Wish* films (which, incidentally, received their fair share of accusations of fascism), had this to say: "I find the *Lord Horror* book grossly racist. I would not wish to defend it. This is precisely the kind of book we should be banning." The judge presiding over the case — no jury of peers was allowed to render a verdict — agreed, and *Lord Horror* became the first novel banned in Britain since Hubert Selby, Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, and Britton himself landed, once again, in jail.

Britton, however, would not be deterred and *Lord Horror*'s journey would stretch out over the course of two more novels: *Motherfuckers: The Auschwitz of Oz* in 1996 and 2000's *Baptised in the Blood of Millions*. His most recent incarnation would be in the series of graphic (and I do mean graphic) novels entitled *Reverberate*, with art by Coulthart.

"Dave and I both have a confrontational streak," Butterworth freely admits, "and have each spent a long life channeling this tendency to make our work as excellent as we can, so that for instance, when *Lord Horror* was conceived, the initial thought of how he should be was discarded, so was the next thought, and the one after that until we arrived at the concept of Lord Horror. He had been Hitler, he had been something else before that, but before pen was set to paper he became William Joyce (aka: Lord Haw Haw). What I am trying to say is that this confrontational tendency we have is the impulse behind a constantly refined alternative universe of characters. David could have used much lesser characters, but he waited for the right ones. In this process, multiplied a hundredfold, and applied in a hundred ways, you can see how a 'philosophy' for Savoy has come about. It isn't just the impulse-to-offend. Any Tom, Dick, or Harry can do that. Jack Nicholson is right when he says the artist has to keep attracting the audience and its values, and we are conscious about the need to shake things up, and we do. But it also comes naturally, from an organic place."

In a lengthy and penetrating essay entitled "Horror Panegyric" Seward passionately defended and celebrated the literary merit of Savoy's most iconic — and iconoclastic — character, Lord Horror himself. (Or perhaps, Lord Horror himself because, as Seward argues, Joyce the man is simply a jumping off point for a



surreal, anarchistic journey through an existential hall of mirrors which reflects the absurd brutality of a world in which bigotry, racism, and violence have long flourished in various shapes and sizes.) The first book Seward encountered in the series was *Motherfuckers*, in which the central characters, Meng and Ecker, are twins who have survived the gruesome "medical" experiments of Dr. Josef Mengele. They now wander in a post-war world, the vicious cruelty they endured having been absorbed and now practiced by them.

It's worth quoting Seward at length about the book: "Sure, there are writers who 'push the envelope.' But *Motherfuckers* does not just push the envelope. It heats at it with fists, kicks, bites, and stabs the envelope. No matter how jaded a reader you are, no matter how much you've read your Henry Miller and Marquis de Sade, this is the book that will leave you feeling bad for the envelope. After *Motherfuckers*, it will never be the same again."

CONTROVERSY

"Savoy is an incredible story made up of many moving parts — the police harassment that David Britton and Michael Butterworth have suffered, the championship of not just obscure but of obscure books, the excursions into music that have resulted in the resurrection of P. J. Proby, and, of course, the invention of a veritable franchise of Lord Horror productions," comments Seward. "All of this achieved in spite of legal hassles, financial dilemmas, and God knows what personal sacrifices."

No one can deny Savoy's work, its Lord Horror material in particular, stirs up strong emotions. Then again, a fair amount of work concerning the Holocaust does. It's worth noting, in this context, that some sociologists and historians have argued that, "How did the Holocaust happen?" is not so much the question to be asking as it is, "Why don't things like the Holocaust happen more often?" It's a question Butterworth himself has wrestled with. "At the beginning of the



1980's, I set out to try to discover just *that*, how the Holocaust happened, and I think I managed to arrive at a few unexpectedly commonplace truths, but as to your question, why don't these terrible things happen more often, that is one of the things we were concerned with in *Reverberation*, where we postulate the existence of an eternal ubiquitous city built on the ethnic dead. It is the atrocity of racial cleansing taken to lofty, absurd extremes. As a species, homo-sapiens is on the brink, unable to adapt to its own advances in technology. I don't believe any longer human extinction will happen. I've become a lot more optimistic and hopeful as I've grown older. The 'gravity' of our civilization is now such that it probably can't be pulled down, no matter how hard some may try. But such views may still come to pass, and *Reverberation* is a valid reflection of them. I see it as a kind of dark speculative fantasy, part prophetic warning as we continue to overpopulate the planet, resorting to barbaric solutions, part bizarre therodny to the primitive tendencies that refuse to go away."

Despite Butterworth's eloquent and articulate explanations, Savoy has hardly been welcomed into the publishing mainstream. Yet, during its darkest hours, several people spring to its defense, for which Butterworth remains deeply appreciative. "Geoffrey Robertson [a noted human rights lawyer and academic], the way he came to our defense has had a profound impact. Without him standing up for us, our work would have been physically destroyed by the police as soon as it was published. As it was, we had a battle to save what we could of our comics. Keith Seward has moved us greatly in his defense of us. There are others, academic such as Julian Petley and Benjamin Noys, who have taken our work seriously, and have gone into print to say so. Ramsey Campbell gave us a supportive quote at a crucial moment, and Douglas E. Winter has been a constant and fearless champion, for which we are very grateful."

Still, with the charges of anti-Semitism and fascist sympathies that have been leveled at Savoy in general and Britton in particular over the years (though they

have decreased of late), what does a reader like Seward make of such accusations? Indeed, a few of Savoy's most vitriolic critics have suggested comparisons between the *Lord Horror* books and white supremacist William Luther Pierce's (writing as Andrew Macdonald) book *The Turner Diaries*, which is widely believed to have been one of Timothy McVeigh's inspirations for the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, which killed 168 people. "I have read *The Turner Diaries*, and I believe it possesses no literary qualities whatsoever," Seward comments. "It is 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' You could argue its quantifiable impact must indicate some merit, but I would reply that it has the merit of propaganda, not literature. In that sense, *The Turner Diaries* has more in common with political statements, religious tracts, and toothpaste advertisements than with Savoy Books." Furthermore, while Pierce's novel has been acknowledged by the attackers themselves in several race-related crimes, no one has ever cited any of the *Lord Horror* books in a similar fashion.

But why treat what is arguably the seminal event of the twentieth century in a way that runs the risk of charges of exploitation and gratuity? Why dance on the edge of what many will perceive as excessive gore better suited to one of Lucio Fulci's spaghetti zombie flicks? "The horror genre has always been central to us. Clark Ashton Smith, H. P. Lovecraft, J. G. Ballard, even William Burroughs, are in the lineage in which we feel we belong," answers Butterworth. "I think it's fair to say that the last landmark horror books that pushed the genre forward were Clive Barker's *Books of Blood*. Clive has been very kind to us, featuring us on his television program, *Clive Barker's A-Z of Horror*, but we differ with him in the sense that he has spoken publicly that he would not do a book that featured the Holocaust. We, on the other hand, see the Holocaust as the ultimate horror, to be approached seriously. To judge it as a dark fairy tale is not to belittle the terrible happenings that went on there, and we wanted to face them head on, like no other book has. Not to be frightened, but to be hard and intense — and let the readers feel the horror of those dreadful places. We wanted to create characters that come from that ultimate horror. It took a great deal of courage on our part to go against more or less a hundred percent ban on any book that treated the Holocaust from the point of view of Horror. So we are saying, if we will be allowed a degree of hubris, that the *Lord Horror* books are the twenty-first century yardstick by which horror fiction should be judged. As they say, nobody does it better, nobody does it, period."

ART, ANGUISH, AND ECSTASY

Leaving aside the legal issues of freedom of expression and censorship, the best — or, some would no doubt say, the worst — of Savoy's material digs down into questions more primal than the legal definitions of obscenity. It forces the awkward but inevitable issues of what the nature and function of art is. Can, for example, shock value in and of itself be an aesthetic value? Butterworth, for one, does not see any great merit in shock value without some accompanying theme or insight, in his work or in others. "We set out to shock, and David, in particular, deliberately cranks up the ante in our novels and comics and sets everything going in a mad hyper-reality. But there would be no art in what we were doing if we were gratuitous for the sake of it, if we shocked without purpose to offend, as some exponents do. 'Value' implies commerce, and though certain 'critics,' included among them some judges and policemen and most of the U. K. media, have confused us with schlockmeisters, we don't see ourselves that way."

Still, given that anti-Semitism remains a disturbing and persistent reality both in the hearts of private citizens and on the world stage, it's hardly unfair to ask the question, "Why not put a disclaimer disavowing anti-Semitism at either the beginning or end of *Reverberation* or *Lord Horror*?" After all, if your intentions are not to stir up racial animosity, why forgo the opportunity to be perfectly clear about that? Surely, a strong and straightforward repudiation of anti-Semitism or bigotry of any kind might have made life just a bit easier for the team at Savoy, not to mention those loyal enough to continue selling and reading the work. Hell, *Lord Horror*'s author h/o could mention the simple fact that Britton's father is Jewish. What gives?

Not having heard Britton or Butterworth speak on this issue personally, I would hesitate to ask even if I could. Any speculation would be much more fun, but ultimately, of course, just speculation nonetheless. Still, when considering the questions above, two quotes spring to mind, ones that might light the way, at least for this reader. The first is from the late New Yorker film critic Pauline Kael, who wrote in her review of Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, "Is there anything more repellent than a clean-minded pornographer?" The other is by

Mel Brooks, who once said, "My movies rise above vulgarity." The creator of a character such as Lord Horro, in this context, saves himself from Kad's snarky charge and shows a certain kinship of sensibility to Brooks in not throwing out the easy disclaimer or qualifier. What could be more creepy — or more cowardly — than a writer rubbing the hearts and minds of his readers through page after page after page of some of the most shocking and transgressive material they've read, only to cover himself with a conventional and self-serving paragraph or two letting the world know he's really a swell and decent chap who abhors whatever thoughts might have been stirring you as you toughed your way through his book? No, the author here has, in that respect, the courage of his convictions. Or the confidence of his artistry, for that matter. The work is there to stand on its own. Take it or leave it, and draw from it what you will. A pretty rock n' roll attitude: stubborn and rebellious, but also bonorable and true in its refusal to compromise for the sake of expedient comfort.

Then again, it might be a paradoxical sign of respect for the reader's intelligence, a willingness, either courageous or fatalistic or both, to let them make up their own minds. Of course, there are certainly clues along the way. For example, one of the quotes found in the pages of *Reverstorm*, Volume 1, Number 11, features novelist, literary critic, and, not incidentally, Holocaust researcher George Steiner's quote, "The dark places are at the center, pass them by and there can be no serious discussion of the human potential." And whatever else it does, *Reverstorm* takes an unflinching look at the dark places at the center of the human psyche, and it does so with a sort of wild integrity.

Offending people isn't hard, but offending people in a truly memorable and unique way is. The seemingly oxymoronic axiom of offending people well is an art not easily mastered, and one sign of it being mastered is that the offending work is alive, the work of genuine talent, not merely someone stinging for a literary footlight.

The often-used characterization of Savoy's material as "politically incorrect" seems, to this humble reader, to be as misguided as it is convenient. Classically defined, political correctness is the elevation of sensitivity over truth. But a work like *Lord Horro* is neither politically incorrect nor simply incorrect. Or politically correct, for that matter. It simply is. It comes at you with the force of its own nature and plays by its own rules. It is an experience. As Butterworth himself has noted, the work offers not a message, but a vision. This is what makes it unpalatable to many and exhilarating to others. Some may feel it's both at once. The tension between the emotionally disturbing subject matter and the obvious talent that went into writing it gives the material both its pop and its pulse. It's a skillful mixture that can cause the reader agony or ecstasy, but it won't cause indifference.

"We've said on a number of occasions that what people meant by 'adult comics' when these things were first being mooted in the 1980's, were invariably misconstrued to be nothing more than adding explicit sex and violence to the usual superhero scenarios," explains Cowthart. "Our conception of adult comics was comics for adults, not comics with 'adult' content. In other words, only someone who's reasonably well-read and who recognizes some of the cultural references — and then sees how those references interrelate — will get anything substantial from the *Reverstorm* series. Kids might like some of the artwork, but the content will be varying degrees of confusing or meaningless. This was confirmed the few times we went to conventions and found our stall completely ignored by teenage comic readers.

"Regarding censorship," he continues, "you have to do the work first. Be true to that and worry about the reaction later. Otherwise, you'd be looking over your shoulder the whole time. Dave Britton's myths concern fascism and the Holocaust; no one should try and soft-pedal either of those subjects."

Again, Seward weighs in. "By its nature, transgression is a very obvious quality. It screams in your ear. Literariness, however, tends to be subtle. It may only whisper. For that reason, everyone bears the transgressions, but only a few, those with more sensitive instruments, pick up the literary merits of a work. Eventually those few will make a compelling case for the literary merits, and meanwhile the headbangers — the ones who read a book for the loudness of the volume — will take the merit on faith or perhaps not even care.

"That being said, if people enjoy a book because it tests their mettle, that's fine. Every work of genius tests your mettle in some way — perhaps by offering a challenging form, a difficult moral, or a vision of life that upsets your own."

Is there a possibility, though, that some covet the material, not because of what they get from it, but because it gives them a certain cache, a certain sense



of being in the know? And if so, what would be the implications of such an attitude? "To enjoy a book because it's a kind of secret among cognoscenti is to enjoy it for the wrong reasons — to treat it as a fashion item, a badge of your hipness," Seward argues. "A book ought to sink or swim on its own literary merits, and that's what you should read it for. Generations of people have read *Paradise Lost*, for example, and that doesn't diminish my joy when Milton has Satan say, 'Awake, arise, or be forever fallen!' If millions of people were to read *Motherfuckers*, that wouldn't detract one bit from the pleasure that the book has to offer."

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES AND OTHER DIRECTIONS

Since its inception, Savoy has managed to have its hands in everything from the republication of neglected novels to the publication and distribution of new ones. It has sold science fiction, fantasy, erotica, graphic novels, and musicology books on AC/DC and KISS, bootlegs as well as original records of artists. It has resurrected the career of faded rocker P. J. Proby, who would not only record songs for Savoy, but read the audio version of *Lord Horro*. And so forth. It is unique among England's cultural landscape in its eclectic offerings.

Along the way, though, some of its proposed projects have had to be scrapped, such as the aforementioned U. K. publication of William Burroughs's *Cities of the Red Night*. Other projects that did not reach fruition as a result of the time and money lost by Anderson's repeated raids include a novel of science fiction erotica by Philip Jose Farmer. Were there other casualties of Savoy's legal hassles? "Yes," answers Butterworth, "the Gerald Scarfe [the acclaimed cartoonist who provided the artwork for both the album and film *Pink Floyd's The Wall*] book we planned to do, also Heathcote Williams's *Severe Jay*, a collection of his 60's and 70's work, and also the Brian Gysin book of interviews *Here to Go: Planet R101*

WHEN YOU PUT YOUR ARMS AROUND ME



that I commissioned and put so much work into and had to let go..."

Despite these missed (or, perhaps more accurate, stolen) opportunities, Savoy still sees itself expanding into new ventures. Says Butterworth, "Theatre and film are two of the things missing from our media umbrella. We would still like to get *Lord Horror* and *Meng and Ecker* performed or filmed." Were *Lord Horror* ever to reach the big screen, what actors does he feel could possibly embody such a character? "There have been several people we thought could have played *Lord Horror*, for instance, the young Rutger Hauer. I haven't seen him, but Dave thinks Daniel Craig, who plays James Bond, and who played Francis Bacon's boyfriend in *Love is the Devil* could play him today. Julian Bleach, who played Play in David Glass's stage adaptation of Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast*, would make a convincing *Lord Horror*."

Meanwhile, Coulthart continues to shape *Reverstorm* into a form of its highest possible quality. "I'm putting together the whole series as a single-volume book which will be the definitive edition. The artwork has been scanned and re-lettered. Some minor textual amendments have been made, and I've added some additional pages. We're also adding 32 pages of art from *Hard Core Horror 5* as an opening prelude and the book will include the eighth and final part of *Reverstorm*, which was left half-completed. I'll be finishing that at last."

LEGACY

While Savoy has had its share of struggles through the decades, it appears that it has not just triumphed over the James Andersons of the world, but is also beginning to flourish at large in the Internet age. What effect has the World Wide Web had on Manchester's most infamous publishing house? "In terms of production, it's been immense," says Butterworth. "E-mail communication, and the instant access to information, means we can get books out with less

effort than we used to, and do more ambitious books. And it's amazing how easily you can find people using the Net and also how easily they can find you. As the Internet grows, it will enable us even more."

As a result of such technological advances, not only can readers easily locate such books as Colin Wilson's *The Killer* and Jack Trevor Story's *Something for Nothing* on the Savoy website, but the very titles that Anderson's forces tried so hard to keep away from the citizens of Manchester, England are now readily available to the citizens of Manchester, New Hampshire. And this may be one of the most important aspects of Savoy's legacy, as it makes them a link in the long chain that champions the artist over the censor and the individual over the state, the "battle that is continuous through time," as Butterworth described it. Though often difficult, a glance at recent history makes clear they've been on the right side of that battle. After all, the records of Elvis and the Beatles continue to sell long, long after those who burned and banned their records have faded into obscurity. Once outlawed works such as *Story of O* and the writings of the Marquis de Sade are now sold at Borders and Barnes and Noble. The once scandalous Hugh Hefner now has his own reality show, *The Girls Next Door*, which presents him as a positively benign figure. Yes, Savoy has been a link in this chain, a fighter in the battle that is continuous through time, but that should never obscure the fact they've also been a publisher of genuinely interesting and insightful material.

Still, it's fair to ask, with Savoy's legal battles having abated greatly, does Butterworth ever look back, and feel a perverse nostalgia for the days when he was regularly tussling with the powers that be? "Only in the sense that we miss the energy of those days," he says. "Nostalgia for things past..."

Savoy could have long ago saved itself a lot of troubles by moving closer to the mainstream, by being more cautious and of deferential to Manchester's legal and cultural authorities. This, alas, was not meant to be. But could anyone really have blamed them if they'd decided to take the path of, if not least resistance, less resistance? After all, for a company that has prided it self on its rock n' roll attitude, don't they know that one time anti-establishments rebels such as The Who and The Rolling Stones have been touring under corporate sponsorship for years? Why, even Bob Dylan has licensed his songs for use in commercials. Hasn't so much of the counterculture already been, through either accident or design, absorbed by the dominant culture? In asking these questions, I can't help but think of a passage in Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*, in which an incredulous woman discovers the protagonist wrapping barbed chicken wire around himself in order to imitate the wounds of Christ, and scolds him:

"Well, it's not normal. It's like one of them goey stories, it's something that people have quit doing — like boiling in oil or walling up cats," she said. "There's no reason for it. People have quit doing it."

"They ain't quit doing it as long as I'm doing it," he said.

That, as much as anything, seems to convey the spirit of Savoy. As long as it's around, people ain't quit doing what they're doing.

In the spirit of literature itself, in which the reader is the ultimate judge, perhaps it's only fitting to give the final word not to the men at Savoy, but to one of their readers, one of the people who has been most excited and engaged, even moved by its work. "I can't think of anything like Savoy in America, or elsewhere," says Seward. "They're not strictly a publisher, writer, musician, or impresario, though their work includes all those functions. They're not a movement — they don't write manifestos, like the Dadaists, and they don't have a headquarters, like the Bureau of Surrealist Research, from which Andre Breton was constantly banishing people. Savoy consists of two independents — and a few irregulars sucked into their wake — who pursue their work with the stubborn, grassy passion of obsessives. They're less a movement than a folie a deux — and if such a thing exists in America, it is probably locked away in an institution somewhere."

Savoy Books's official website: savoy.abcl.co.uk

John Coulthart's official website: johncoulthart.com

Keith Seward's official website: supervet.com

Horror Panglossic is available through Amazon and, of course, Savoy Books
Lord Horror, as read by P. J. Proby, is available through iTunes

Note: Savoy has put the appendix to the *Reverstorm* series on its website at savoy.abcl.co.uk/HTML/revapp.html. "That," Coulthart notes, "explains the references for those that want them."

JOHN CARPENTER'S APOCALYPSE

If horror fans can agree on one thing, it is their lowly place within the hierarchy of genre. We are a disrespected lot, cast into the slum of the art world, labeled as either maladjusted teens playing out frustration by ogling the slaughter of nubile coeds, or lonely gore-bounds with social anxiety and traumatic childhoods. The prevailing opinion is that any director can create horror—toss a hall of butcher knives into a crowded room and there's your scary movie; keep a few people alive and you have a sequel.

But horror fans know how difficult it is to create that perfect poison. We have our kings, even if these kings are largely ignored, and when rare praise filters down through the rank and file of critics, it arrives with conditions. A great horror director is rarely deemed a great director without *horror* used as a reminder of his or her place. Which brings us to John Carpenter.

Critics are ambivalent about John Carpenter's rank in cinematic history. He is not quite the director Hitchcock was, not quite the writer Polanski is, and like his hero Howard Hawks, Carpenter violates artistic law by dabbling in multiple genres. The man that brought us 1978's proto-slasher flick *Halloween* also gave us the sci-fi heartbreaker *Starman*, and the made-for-TV Elvis, starring Kurt Russell, Carpenter's soon-to-be muse. It took a gentler movie like 1984's *Starman* to give Carpenter his entry into the big-budget mainstream. Just as two years later it took a big-budget failure like *Big Trouble in Little China* to give Carpenter his walking papers, and put him back where he ostensibly belonged: as king of the horror slum.¹

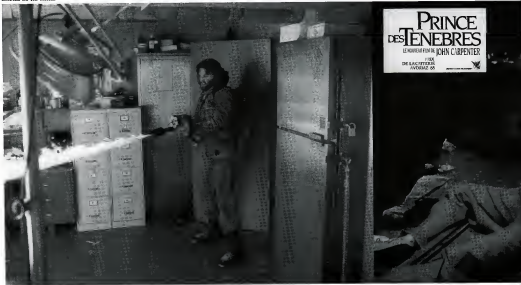
Style is a funny thing with directors, often portrayed as the opposite of substance, as though the two can't happily co-exist. One could argue—and

one will—that the style of a horror movie is its substance; imagine *Halloween* without its cinema verite elements, without the underlighting, without the slow, inevitable pans, or the bleak Carpenter score. Accusations of stylistic theft from Bob Clark's *Black Christmas* are understandable (Clark's slasher film predated *Halloween* by four years), but Carpenter's signature style expanded in subsequent movies, making its original appearance in *Halloween* a harbinger, rather than a one-note imitation.

And what of Carpenter's style? Carpenter is one of those artists who have slipped into the collective unconscious—you know his directorial watermark even if you don't know his name. Even when the dialogue is strained (it often is) and even when the acting is mediocre (sometimes), a Carpenter film remains visceral. And visceral is all we horror fans really need. Carpenter accomplishes this by remaining straightforward. His style is his lack of directorial flourish. Again, the Hawks influence is clear: Carpenter makes movies to tell a story, not to feed the auteur myth. His films trade in scary—they make us look under our beds and check the front door locks.

In particular, three John Carpenter films do that to us: *The Thing*, *Prince of Darkness*, and *In the Mouth of Madness*. These three films comprise his "Apocalypse Trilogy," yet this trilogy is unique in that none of the films are directly connected. They are brothers in nihilism, the machinations of doom offering us three scenarios for the end of the world: *The Thing* by way of alien invasion, *Prince of Darkness* by way of Satan, and *In the Mouth of Madness* by way of Lovecraftian Elder Gods.

¹ [Author's Note] Never mind that *Big Trouble in Little China* was twenty years ahead of its time.



Kurt Russell in *The Thing*

Bodies pile up in

PENNY BLOOD

TRILOGY

by Micah Nathan

Released in 1982 to cranky critics and an apathetic public, *The Thing* is considered Carpenter's best work. Not purely horror, or sci-fi, or psychological thriller, it consumes the best elements of those genres and discards the rest. The plot is simple, taken from the John Campbell novella "Who Goes There": a shape-shifting alien invades an outpost in the South Pole, and picks off the men, one by one. The gory special effects—by the now-legendary Rob Bottin—and relentless tension shoved *The Thing* into the sci-fi/horror section, a box office death knell during a year when the only acceptable aliens were loveable strays (*E.T.*). But to call *The Thing* science fiction or horror is an incomplete categorization. *The Thing* is, like its monster, a gruesome hybrid of multiple parts.

The Thing is Carpenter's lone entry in his Apocalypse Trilogy that does not involve good vs. evil. The shapeshifting alien is not evil—it is a survivor. Just as its victims are not portrayed as saints—they are unlucky scientists, thrust into the bizarre and doing whatever they can to survive. Kurt Russell is a member of this unlucky group, as is Wilford Brimley, yet this film is not about individual actors. The characters soon become interchangeable parts of the same paranoid group. Traditional horror techniques that give the audience comforting exposition (the wise old man, the research scientist, etc.) are tossed aside. We don't know who, or where, the alien is. We become a part of that doomed outpost.

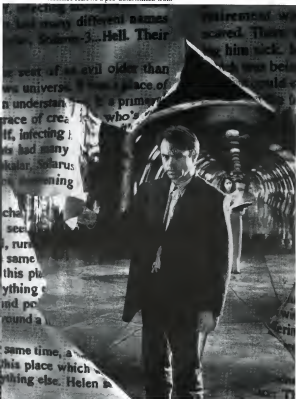
At its heart, *The Thing* is about bad luck.² Bad luck implies a chaotic universe, unfettered by morality. Bad luck reduces us to an existential speck, and reminds us of our frailty on a cosmic scale (a

frailty later explored in both *Prince of Darkness* and *In the Mouth of Madness*). If bad luck is the father of terror, then its child is the Jungian shadow; what do we fear most if not our darkest impulses? Carpenter has never claimed profundity in his work—if anything he has relied too much on self-deprecation, a charming character quirk that helps explain why mainstream Hollywood turned on him so quickly. But if there is any profundity to be uncovered in Carpenter's work, it

² [AN:] Bad luck all around: That these men were given this particular assignment at this particular outpost, that the alien chose their outpost to invade, etc. I've always felt that randomness is crucial to effective horror, evident in the terror we feel when we hear news of a random shooter, picking off victims with no motivation other than homicidal urge. In contrast, we don't find crimes as scary when the perpetrator knows the victim. There is some comfort in believing violence follows a pre-determined trail.



Prince of Darkness



Sam Neill in *In the Mouth of Madness*

can be found in *The Thing*. The Jungian shadow-self is given graphic detail in the form of the alien shapeshifter, hiding within its victims, eventually turning nerdist scientists into mewling, tentacled monstrosities. Simply put: Carpenter shows us the monster, and it looks exactly like us.

The monster-disguised-as-human is a tired plot device now, and it was a tired plot device in 1982 (the 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* contributed to the fatigue). But Carpenter made it seem fresh by reducing the scale and upping the intensity. Rather than start in the cities, world conquest begins in a remote Arctic outpost, and when the alien reveals itself, it isn't with white contact lenses and piercing screams. It happens in full, three-dimensional glory. Heads sprout spidery legs and walk across the floor, lashing tentacles burst from stomachs, and necks split and blossom into gaping maws with rows of bloody teeth. It's the audacious stuff of genius, confirming Rob Bottin as the Mozart of gore to Savini's Liszt.²

The Thing also terrifies because Carpenter and screenwriter Bill Lancaster refuse to comfort the audience with exposition. Early in the film we are shown a massive hole in the ice, evidence of an unearthed space ship site. That is all we are given. Standard questions (what is this thing? why is it here? how do we defeat it?) are left for the men to ponder, provided those unfortunate men have the time. Which Carpenter does not give them—clinical discussions of the alien are interrupted by gruesome deaths, and we soon realize we will never know, that for all our intelligence we still cannot outthink death. So we continue to ponder...but we do so while watching these men run for their lives.

Prince of Darkness was Carpenter's second film in the Apocalypse Trilogy, and it remains—even after twenty forgiving years—an intriguing disappointment. It is the only film in Carpenter's trilogy written by Carpenter, and its blend of physics and Satan falters under its own ambition. But the film is worth watching if only for the set-up, and the atmosphere of dread that persists despite the flaws.

We begin with a church, a team of physics grad students (including Carpenter favorites, Victor Wong and Dennis Dun), an old priest (the reliable Donald Pleasence), and a cylinder of green liquid in the church basement. The students are brought to the church to research the nature of this green liquid that displays several reality-bending properties (it drips upward and pools on the ceiling, for example), and we eventually discover the origins of the green liquid via the usual narrative devices: translated ancient manuscripts, theological discussions, and the revelations of an old priest. Dream sequences play an important role in *Prince of Darkness*, an ambitious device because conventional artistic wisdom states that people don't care about the dreams of fictional characters.³

We later learn these dream sequences—in which a shadowy figure tells the protagonist he is a

THE FIRST APOCALYPSE

JOHN CARPENTER DISSECTS *THE THING*

by Kathleen Scheiner

When John Carpenter began his career in the film industry, his real passion lay in a genre that had fallen out of mainstream popularity, a genre whose themes and flourishes would inform much of his later work in other genres. "I wanted to make westerns, and westerns weren't being made anymore, really, unless you had John Wayne or Clint Eastwood," he says. "I wrote a screenplay for John Wayne, but then he passed away and it didn't work out."

Carpenter grew up with a love for cinema and began attending films when he was three or four years old with his family. "My mom was a movie addict. We went to the movies. We didn't grow up with a television set, so the only time I would see television at all would be at friends' houses." But, he adds, "In the fifties, movies would change every couple of days. You'd have features going through there like crazy."

With an almost daily film consumption during his formative years, Carpenter came to adore the genres for which he is best known: "I loved science fiction and horror movies. I look at them now and boy are they bad, but they're so fabulous. I still have my memories about them. I watch them over and over again, but compared to today's films, they're pretty cheesy."

A major influence on Carpenter has been the work of Howard Hawks, whose 1951 film *The Thing From Another World* Carpenter remade as his 1982 opus, *The Thing*.

Carpenter was attracted to Hawks's films as a child and later studied under him while attending the University of Southern California. "I saw *Rio Bravo* in 1959, and it was all over Bowling Green, a really small town, for two weeks. There was nothing else to go see, so I kept going to see it, and it really resonated with me," said Carpenter. "Much later, I arrived at film school and one of our lecturers is Howard Hawks."

Carpenter believes Hawks's films can be divided into two categories: adventure stories and comedies. The adventure appealed more to Carpenter. "His adventure stories are about a group of men who are trapped in some risky undertaking. They may be raccoons drivers, they may be cowboys, they may be pilots; they may be on the outskirts of the Arctic. They band together as a group and they get their strength in the group," he says. "Sometimes the women are allowed in the group—they always go after the leader—and sometimes not."

In Carpenter's *The Thing* he practices this formula... minus the women. He explains that this was not an arbitrary decision, but one based on the demographics of the Arctic at the time. "Actually there was a scene with one of those sex dolls, but we cut it out," he jokes. "At the time we did the research... there were fewer women there than there are now. Very few. Strange things happen down there. I mean, strange stuff. People go crazy out there."

Though he took obvious inspiration from Hawks's version of *The Thing* when it came time to do his own, Carpenter relied heavily on the original source material. "This is a movie that goes back to the original novella, *Who Goes There?* [by John W. Campbell, Jr.] The essence of that [story] is—How do I know that you are you and my friend? How do I know that you are human? What does it mean to be human? How can I tell if you are not human? It's about the end of the world. The end of the world that we don't get to see but we assume." He goes on to describe Hawks's interpretation as being more like Frankenstein in that the monster was kept hidden. This is an old cliché of Hollywood that the only good horror is that which is in the shadows.

Some critics have claimed that Carpenter's *The Thing* is too taken with special effects, going for the gross-out rather than substance. Carpenter



² [IAN:] The Sopranos notwithstanding.

visitor from the future, and is here to give warning about the green cylinder—are indeed messages from the future, transmitted subconsciously. The dream sequences are unsettling (helped by Carpenter filming the entire movie with a distorting anamorphic lens) and they transcend the pedestrian scares that populate the rest of the movie. This is an important point: making fictional dreams scary is damn hard (does anyone believe Hitchcock's *Spoilbrow* is better with such scenes?) and it reveals Carpenter's technique of teasing out exposition.

The green liquid is eventually revealed to be Satan, foreshadowed by insect swarms, worms on the windows of the church, a throbbing synth soundtrack, and shuffling hordes of homeless people falling under Satan's power (including Alice Cooper in a remarkably creepy performance). Satan escapes by possessing one of the students and the possession spreads, turning *Prince of Darkness* into a locked-house battle of the unpossessed vs. the possessed. It is obvious that Carpenter loves a good siege movie (i.e. *Assault on Precinct 13*) which translates to Carpenter loving a good zombie movie¹, and while there is nothing wrong with zombie movies, *Prince of Darkness* takes too much time and technical mumbo-jumbo arriving at such a simplistic climax. We expect something more, but Carpenter makes us momentarily forget our disappointment by reverting to his tried-and-true standards. Much like *The Thing*, nerdy scientists become vessels of doom. Once again, the monster looks like us.

The denouement almost makes up for this disappointing climax, taking a unique theological tack by revealing Satan to be the son of a greater evil, an "Anti-God" that needs Satan to usher him back to our world. A mirror is designated as the gate to hell, and just as one of the possessed characters is about to reach into that mirror and pull out the Anti-God, the protagonist's girlfriend saves humanity by throwing herself at the mirror. Glass shatters, the girlfriend disappears, and we last see her floating in the netherworld, trapped on the other side of the glass in a pool of hazy water, fading into the darkness like Persephone.

For everything that's wrong with *Prince of Darkness*, it still works. I recall a greasy terror after watching it the first time, and even now certain scenes keep their effectiveness: beetles pouring from a man's mouth, Alice Cooper impaling an unfortunate soul with a sharpened bicycle frame, and murder by way of garden shears. Weak dialogue, a jumbled narrative, and pacing problems ultimately place *Prince of Darkness* among Carpenter's lesser works. But it's still scary, proving that even when Carpenter isn't at his best, he's good enough.

H.P. Lovecraft's fiction has proved to be nearly impossible to translate into quality cinema—dreck

explains that the confrontational style he developed for *The Thing* was intentional, and necessary. "I decided I'm going to go back to the original, and I'm going to bring this bug-eyed monster out and I'm going to shove it right in your face. I'm going to put it in light so you believe that you're seeing it. It's not some guy in a rubber suit. That was on purpose. There are a couple of shots in *The Thing* that I wish we had computer technology for. Then I could have made them better, but I'm not going to tell you which ones."

It seems difficult to believe that CGI could have improved the film at all; as it remains a masterpiece of gritty, tactile horror, much of which was conveyed by the real-life extremity of the shoot. The director recalls, "We were shooting in British Columbia on a glacier. It was about twenty-two degrees, but there was the windchill so it was below zero by I don't know how much. We were dead tired. Working that set was like being a coal miner."

Though *The Thing* seems wide open for a sequel, Carpenter says Universal has never approached him about doing a follow-up. Instead, he was tapped to appear in a 2002 video game based on the film, "I am Doc Faraday. Unfortunately, Doc Faraday is killed, but I am in the game—they came and photographed me," said Carpenter. "You really have to get pretty far along in the game before you see me.... It's not an easy game to play."

Though his recent work has not been well received, Carpenter is hopeful about the future of the horror genre. "It started with horror movies. [Horror] will always be with us—it changes with every color, it changes with the times. It is the most durable genre, and it keeps getting reinvented by people."

It is a genre of primal simplicity. "There are two kinds of horror.... One is the evil is out there. It's beyond the woods, it's in the dark, it's the other, it's the guy who

doesn't look like me. The guy who's a different color, he comes from outer space. Then there's another evil that's in here—in the heart—that's in all of us. Those are the two basic stories that you can tell."

Carpenter distills it even further.... to one emotion: Fear, of course. "What you've got going in the main horror films is that everybody on earth is scared. We are all scared of the same things. We're born afraid. We get our asses slapped and start crying. We're afraid of dying, the loss of a loved one, disfigurement, the loss of identity. Whatever you're afraid of, I'm afraid of," he says. "It's a universal topic. A Japanese movie might be a comedy in Japan—I don't get it; I don't understand it—but I got the horror movie idea because it's primal. That's what makes it so powerful."



¹ [AN:] All zombie movies are, at their core, siege movies. The opposite also holds true. Yes, that means I'm calling *Straw Dogs* Dustin Hoffman's only zombie movie.

like *From Beyond* and *Re-Animator* emphasize the unintentional camp of Lovecraft's writing—yet the Lovecraftian ethos of man squashed beneath the scaly thumb of ancient, omnipotent evil is at last realized with Carpenter's final film in his Apocalypse Trilogy. The result is *In the Mouth of Madness*, a giant wink interspersed with moments of genuine terror, played straight by the never-disappointing Sam Neill, and a cameo by Charlton Heston thrown in for good measure.

Framing horror as flashback is risky, especially if the flashback is told by the protagonist, because it reveals to the audience the protagonist survived to tell his tale. But Carpenter and screenwriter Michael de Luca work around this problem by twisting reality enough to keep the audience guessing. Sam Neill plays insurance investigator John Trent, and we first meet Trent in an insane asylum, his room—and his face—covered in crosses drawn with black crayon. A law enforcement agent of undetermined affiliation visits Trent, and asks him to recount what happened during his search for the horror author Sutter Cain. With cigarette lit by a shaking hand, Trent begins his flashback.

We learn that Sutter Cain's publisher hired Trent to find their wildly popular horror author, who had disappeared before submitting the final draft of his novel *In the Mouth of Madness*. Trent plays the

skeptical agent well, yet his skepticism is tested by a series of nightmares. These nightmares are played straighter than the staccato visions in *Prince of Darkness*, but their effect is powerful. A deformed cop beats a homeless man; shadow-clad alley dwellers are revealed to be mutants; an axe chops flesh and blood spatters across an alley wall.

Trent's journey takes us to the town of Hobb's End, a place we discover exists only in Cain's work. Sutter Cain imagines it, therefore it is. This follows the theme of fiction-creating-reality, prefaced by Cain's editor telling Trent that Cain's work has an unusual effect on its readers, turning many of them into paranoids. Carpenter introduces one such paranoid via one of his all-time best shot sequences: early in the film Trent and his friend have lunch in front of a giant window, and through the window we see an axe-wielding man in a trenchcoat. The man crosses the busy city street, walking toward the camera while people run in terror, and Trent and his friend remain unaware even as the man kicks aside the diner's patio tables and bolts the axe aloft. Cut to the window shattered by the axe, a rain of gunfire courtesy of the police, and later we are told the would-be axe murderer was Cain's literary agent. Cain's agent, it seems, has read *In the Mouth of Madness* and learns that Trent will unknowingly usher in the end of the world.

And how does the world end? By Lovecraftian Elder Gods, of course. Trent eventually finds Cain in the hall of a Byzantine black church, and Cain reveals that what he writes becomes reality, by virtue of his millions of readers. It is collective imagination taken to the extreme; if enough people believe something, it becomes true. Trent is merely a character in Cain's book, used to bring his final novel to the world, and all of Trent's actions are the result of Cain's words. But Cain also reveals he is not acting from imagination—he is the conduit for those Elder Gods, who seek to return to the earth through the power of Cain's fiction.

Sound confusing? It is, but Carpenter weaves these existential threads into enough horror and shock moments to make it all seem logical. Trent realizes his role too late—as much as he tries to burn the manuscript and prevent it from reaching the publishers, he cannot. The story is set and sealed. Trent will deliver the book, and the book will deliver the apocalypse. Perhaps this is the closest Carpenter will get to boasting, delivering the message that artists have the power to influence perception and thus reality. But I detected satire more than anything; Carpenter condemns those critics who give horror more power than it deserves. As if cinematic violence leads to violence in real life. As if all our fascination with monsters will one day unleash real monsters.

**PRINCE
DES TENEBRES**
LE NOUVEAU FILM DE JOHN CARPENTER
PREMIER
DE LA CRITIQUE
A'ORIENT 55



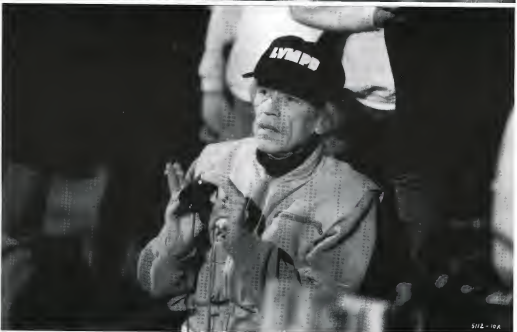
not including the real monsters that walked among us long before cinema.

all its clichés—and directors are still searching for terror without irony. Watch a John Carpenter film and you are reminded that there is something to be taken from the past, that what used to work still

does. His Apocalypse Trilogy proves the lie that true horror is *easy*. It also proves that true horror is the product of genius, even among the slums of the art world.

Though the past fifteen years have seen Carpenter's status as "master of horror" fade into the realm of honorary, his style remains unique. We have yet to see another director from the "Carpenter school," while Hitchcock has spawned numerous imitators, Fulci remains a working influence, and remnants of Argento and Bava remain. This may have less to do with influence than with current horror directors' inability to decipher just what it is about Carpenter that works.

Perhaps it is the earnestness in Carpenter's work that makes his style difficult to imitate. Much of post-modern horror is either steeped in ultra-realistic yet sanitized gore (rather than amp the realism, the clinical vividness adds to the unreality) or done with a nod to the audience. It's as though horror has yet to fully recover from *Scream*—a brilliant scorched earth take on horror and



SHZ-10A

Bloodwork

DVD Reviews

All the Boys Love Mandy Lane
(Senator Entertainment, 2006)

D: Jonathan Levine

W: Jacob Forman

C: Amber Heard, Anson Mount, Whitney Able, Michael Welch, Edwin Hodge, Aaron Himelstein, Luke Grimes, Melissa Pricce, Adam Powell



All the boys love Mandy Lane. And they're not kidding! As she walks the school hallways, the boys—and the girls, for that matter—are awestruck. They study her like they were cramming for a mid-term exam. First they survey her boobs, perched neatly and self-possessed in a simple, but smart blouse, then the eyes scan up to her face to explore her natural, girl-next-door prettiness, and finally they watch, as the passes, her ass.

Mandy walks this adolescent gauntlet of hormonal-attention without airs, impervious, seemingly oblivious, to the wanton stares. At the end of the hallway, with stunning modesty, she greets her rendezvous, a gawky, smirk-faced creche named Emmet—her best friend.

Pretty, unpretentious, and hangs out with geeks! Christ! Really, what's not to love about Mandy Lane?

But her mystique seems to run a lot deeper than hallway stares. As we see later that night, while she and her nerd friend attend a Senior class party, some boys are willing to risk their life for Mandy.

A stoked-up jock fails to impress her with a back flip into the pool from high off the rooftop. He does, however, succeed in making an impression on the poolside cement.

Cut to nine months later, Mandy's magic has now reached fever pitch. She's the talk of the school. If the boys aren't actively seeking her company, they're pontificating on her charms, orating to football bleachers full of coeds as if performing a one-man play. The world where Mandy lives is in her control. That is, until she joins some of her classmates for a weekend at a remote country home. There, the kids will be grown ups. All decorum ever witnessed at any teenage party is disposed of with the first whiff of bud, and inhibitions are dropped like so many pairs of panties. And all the boys—some of the girls, too—are vying to see who will have first dibs on Mandy Lane's virtue.

As usual, when the behavior gets naughty, the body count piles up. But, who's doing the bad deeds? Is it the quiet handy man? A disgruntled friend? The horny, neglected dude? Well... you'll figure it out before too long.

Mandy aims for the sub category of "smart horror." Lamentably, the film just misses the mark,

being more affected than really smart. There's not a lot new here, but enough freshness by director Jonathan Levine (*The Wackness*) to keep things interesting. There are catchy characters and some sharp, although sometimes too stylized, dialogue. But the one thing that really keeps this film from achieving any real greatness is the performance of Amber Heard, who plays Mandy Lane. Mandy Lane is a girl who, seemingly without effort, ruled the school. The thing is, Heard lacks such unbridled charisma. Sure, she's got the good looks, and yeah, high school kids are sometimes quite impressionable, but the problem is, all the wonderful things I'd learned about Mandy Lane—about her influence, her mystique, her sex appeal—I didn't witness on screen, but merely found out from the other characters moving about her. Heard is decent enough an actress, but not once did I behold a personality that could yield such prominence over virtually an entire school. I like the idea, but I only wish the filmmaker would have found a girl who could've made me love Mandy Lane, too. —Barry Meyer

Bryan Loves You (Anchor Bay, 2006)

D: Seth Landau

W: Seth Landau

C: Tony Todd, George Wendt, Tiffany Shepis, Lloyd Kaufman, Daniel Roebuck, Brinke Stevens, Chuck Williams



like zombies. In fact, everyone in the cult walks about like zombies.

The film opens with a precarious challenge delivered by Tony Todd, who has the weary duty of introducing the movie. He warns that what we are about to watch has proven to be so disturbing that some people have gone literally insane after viewing it. With a challenge like that, the following movie had better deliver.

Not unexpectedly, after sitting through Todd's melodramatic fear-and-leather routine, which reaches a near embarrassing crescendo, the movie that followed was a complete disappointment.

The first problem is the unbelievable conceit that the film is compiled of "found footage." Not that we don't already know that the movie is only a piece of fiction, but the found footage in this movie has as much coverage as any other fictional movie.

That is to say, the "footage" comes from multiple surveillance cameras, or home recorded videos. But oddly and conveniently, every angle is covered! Every move nicely centered on screen, all action takes place perfectly within the frame. So lucky are we, that every room in the mental ward has about three cameras, and that the murders happen in perfect sight of the them, and that most people are paranoid, or egomaniacal enough to videotape everything they do.

Besides genre fave Tony Todd, the cast boasts some other bigger names, like George Wendt. After watching his cameo as a paranoid patient on the shrink's couch, you have to wonder if the filmmakers had some incriminating photos of ex-Cheers barfly. Did he and Danny Roebuck (*The River's Edge*) have nothing better to do?

Worse yet is the bizarre director's track on the DVD extras. Director Seth Landau (*Ted Bundy*) is joined by some of the cast members (no Wendt doesn't show up) to speak about the making of this movie. Honestly, I only tuned in to learn if Landau would discuss why he ended the movie the way he did. I never did get the answer. I jumped ahead to the end only to be greeted by a silent audio track. Curious why the track would end before the movie, I backtracked and discovered the oddest thing I'd ever heard on a director's commentary. Landau had decided that he still wanted to force this idea that the movie was made up of real life events, so rather abruptly during the discussions between cast and crew, a mysterious assailant bursts into the recording room and threatens the people, telling them that they will all die. Oddly, the assailant is speaking in an electronically modulated voice (it's a good thing the audio guy had the sense to tweak his voice—or maybe he was in the cult!). Arguments ensue, threats are made, guns are brandished, and after one of the female members of the cast or crew (I couldn't tell which person was which at this point, but I'm assuming it was the bolder of the female stars, Tiffany Shepis) takes a stand and declares that she just won't tolerate being called a "bitch." For this, it seems, they all get blown to bits by the Darth Vader-esque assailant. An intriguing end to a rather lack luster movie. —BM

Curse of the Devil (BCI, 1973)



D: Carlos Aured

W: Jacinto Molina (Paul Naschy)

C: Paul Naschy, Fabiola Falcón, Maritza Oliveres, Inés Morales

I'm new to the cult of Paul Naschy. Though I've been aware of his prolific output for decades, it wasn't until I began

reviewing for *Penny Blood* that I actually began watching his films.

Love him or hate him, Naschy is a horror icon. In Spain, he defines the horror genre.

Though no Cushing or Lee, he's a decent, photogenic actor with a good onscreen presence.

Not all of Naschy's films are the masterpiece his fans proclaim them to be, but, to be fair, Hammer and Universal made a few lesser films as well.

Curse of the Devil is one of Naschy's wildly popular Daninsky Werewolf films.

It's a mixed bag.

On the plus side, Naschy gives a strong, sympathetic performance as Waldemar Daninsky, a tortured 19th Century land owner who's cursed with lycanthropy. The curse is placed on him in part because of the actions of an ancestor, in part because he accidentally killed a member of a local satanic cult.

Shot on real, atmospheric locations, the film is a visual stunner. The castle set that serves as Daninsky's home may not be the cavernous labyrinth often seen in Hammer/Universal productions, but it's an actual, and quite lovely, Spanish castle.

As beautiful as that castle might be, it's obviously not the kind of structure one would see in the Carpathians, where the story is set. Spanish architecture is exclusive to Spain. The film looks and feels like it's Castilian locations — why not set the film where it was shot?

The werewolf makeup is adequate, in some shots bearing a striking resemblance to the work applied to Lon Chaney Jr. by Jack Pierce in 1941's *The Wolfman*.

The film's attempts at gore are laughable: one blood drenched victim appears to have had a can of red paint poured onto his head!

Naschy and onscreen love interest Fabiola Falcon share a good deal of screen time. They work well together; as an ill fated, cursed couple, they'll win your sympathies. The gorgeous, long-haired Falcon looks stunning in her Victorian dresses.

Naschy and Buro-horror expert Mirek Lipinski offers liner notes that, while well-researched and superbly written, fail to take into account that *Devil* is a B movie and not a work of art by any stretch of the imagination.

BCI offers an acceptable, if slightly grainy print of *Curse of the Devil*. English and Castilian trailers are offered.

The disc lets you watch the film in Castilian with subtitles, or with a badly dubbed English soundtrack that turns the proceedings into a screamingly funny camp fest.

It's recommended that viewers choose to watch in Castilian. Watching the film unspool in the language the cast performed in is always the better option! —David Alex Nahmad

Death Bed: The Bed That Eats (Cult Epics, 1977)

D: George Barry

C: Demene Hall, William Russ, Julie Ritter, Linda Bond, Patrick Spence-Thomas, Rosa Luxemburg, Dave Marsh, Ed Oldani, Dena Stone, Marshall Tate.



The 70s acid freakout is a fairytale gone way wicked. An evil spirit falls hard for a lovely young girl, and after shapeshifting into everything from wind to wood, the spirit finally takes the form of a huge, four post bed in the hope of wooing said girl. When his attempts fail, and she dies, the malevolent spirit is locked inside the bed. Forever bitter, it seeks revenge by swallowing up all the pretty young things that cross its threshold. In a bizarre twist, the entire story is given voice by a prissy boy condemned by the bed to live inside a painting on the wall. There he sits, curled up, lamenting his captivity, while chastising and mocking the death bed for its insatiable, self-destructive and lustful hunger.

Death Bed is such an original that if you overlook its faults (hammy acting, some lame visual effects, bad edits) and just go with it you'll enjoy it as a whimsical drug-induced nightmare.

Director George Barry was flabbergasted to find that his one and only film had such a following, with oodles of Internet boards bursting with praise, and fueling the devotion of a small but rabid fan base. Unbeknownst to Barry, *Death Bed* had become a true cult classic, and he was now able to get the queer little movie re-released onto DVD. Kudos go to the folks at Cult Epics for packaging the original uncut 16mm print. —BM

Five Across the Eyes (Anchor Bay, 2006)

D: Greg Swinson, Ryan Thiessen

W: Greg Swinson

C: Jennifer Barnett, Angela Brunda, Danielle Lilley, Sandra Paduch, Mia Yi, Veronica Garcia.

It was a dicey task, sitting down to review this movie. The apparent low budget-ness of it all was enough to make me question even putting the disc into my DVD player (I've been through a world of hard watching screeners administered by backyard cinema freaks who have less ideas than they do money). The opening act of *Five Across the Eyes* didn't do much to sway me, as I sat and watched a group of high school girls talk trash as they travel a dark, unfamiliar back road, returning home after a football game. Their bickering and angst are all too familiar and delivered with the ham-fisted skill of a kid in a school play, with exaggerated eye rolling and sneers on cue, just like mean girls are supposed to do in the movies. The unsteady handheld camera work and muddled videography didn't get me too excited either.

But somewhere around the thirty-minute mark, things changed. That's when a raging lunatic lady first leaps from her SUV and starts pulling the terrified and confused girls from their mini-van and assaulting them with violence and depraved anger. The occurrence is quite unsettling. It becomes evident to the girls very quickly that the woman isn't angry about them accidentally crunching her headlight back at the parking lot down the road. She hurls insults at them, and vague charges of being a

"whore," and something to do with her husband. The screaming woman is dead set on humiliating these girls for some blurred reason that only she knows. It's frightening enough for these girls to be assailed with a gun, but their terror is heightened by the confusion of why this is happening. That is what works so well in this story. It's not about what's around the corner? Or what's that noise? The attack by this crazy lady comes plain out of nowhere. No noise, no foreboding feelings, just instant, irreversible pain.

Having worked in New York City for nearly thirteen years, I had become acutely aware of this kind of instant terror. On any given day, I could have been shoved off the subway platform and into the path of a speeding train, or knocked unconscious by a deranged homeless guy yielding a brick, or maybe severely beaten by some thrill-seeking kids. It's an overwhelming feeling, made ever more fearsome knowing that these kinds of occurrences are real. Watching Greg Swinson and Ryan Thiessen's *Five Across the Eyes* brought memories of those fears racing back, like the crazed lady in her SUV.

And as suddenly as the fury of that first attack hit them, it ends... weirdly and bewilderingly the woman abruptly realizes the time and cries out that she is late for picking up her children. Before anyone knows it, this road-raging, smartly-dressed soccer mom is in her truck and gone! The girls pile into the battered minivan and speed away. The attack not only focuses them, but it gives focus to the script. The incident has left them exhausted but, like the men of *Deliverance* and kids from *Just Before Dawn*, not too tired to quarrel over blame and unresolved (mean girl) issues. The once trivial relationships between these five girls now becomes an integral part of how they will or will not get out of this mess. As the terror thickens and the attacks grow ever more boundary pushing, the performances tighten.

Each of the five girls nails their role to the blood-soaked floor with a sledge hammer, and the suspense reciprocates. There's the girl who gets brutally violated and regresses to a child-like state to protect, even preserve, her innocence. There's the runt of the litter, who finds that true friendship comes out during a crisis. And most disturbing is the popular girl, who obsesses over her looks to the point of risking her friend's lives to make sure she has no permanent scars. And perhaps, the most dynamic role could be the "minivan." Virtually every scene takes place within its confines. There's barely enough room for these five girls, but add in a cramped camera, and the claustrophobia squeezes your tense nerves beyond belief. It feels like you're right in the van with these girls yourself, going for the ride of a lifetime. —BM

Icons of Horror Collection: Hammer Films: 4 Creepy Classics (Sony, 2008)

D: Various

W: Various

C: Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Susan Strasberg, Barbara Shelley, Paul Massey, Michael Ripper.

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Four more Hammer horrors are now available on disc, thanks to this wonderful, two-disc set from Sony. The titles include: *The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb*, *Scream of Fear*, *The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll*, *The Gorgon*.

Curse of the Mummy's Tomb (1964) and *Scream of Fear* (1961) are especially important, as neither was ever made available on VHS. Both, however, enjoyed letterboxed screenings on Cinemas and TCM.

Hammer's Mummy series weren't sequels: each was a single, self-contained film. They were not the best in the Hammer output. *Tomb* is a slow film like the Universal Kharis series; its Mummy is a laughably slow lumbering thing that any healthy person could easily outrun. The film gets a nice boost from American character actor Fred Clark, who shines as a humorous PT Barnum-like showman. He's going to make millions, showing his Mummy in circus sideshows, curses be damned!

Hammer icon Michael Ripper is wasted in a brief, absurd cameo.

Though hardly scary, the film is silly fun and presents a nicely written twist at its end.

Scream of Fear is a grand, B & W Hitchcockian thriller scripted by Jimmy Sangster. Susan Strasberg shines as a paraplegic being menaced by her wicked stepmother on an isolated estate. Hitch surely would have liked this one!

Dr. Jekyll is a rewriting of the Stevenson story (aren't they all?). Paul Massie is superb in the title roles, though this is hardly the groundbreaking adult shocker it's made out to be. Rouben Mamoulian's daring 1932 version still has that distinction. In spite of Massie's terrific performance and some great sets, *Jekyll* fails because the characters are so unlikable. All of them!

The Gorgon is a treat! This scary creep-fest about an ancient Greek demon terrorizing an Eastern European village is a grand, gothic delight. As always, Cushing & Lee give wonderful performances. The cavernous castle set is a shadowy, spooky labyrinth. Though the snake-for-hair effects are a bit cheesy looking, the film remains a Hammer classic.

All four films are letterboxed, and the prints are quite vibrant. This is especially welcome in the case of *Dr. Jekyll*, whose pan and scan VHS release had such washed out colors that the film was rendered unwatchable. *Gorgon* was also released on a Pan & Scan tape, so seeing it in its original aspect ratio, with its almost storybook coloring, is nice!

Original American theatrical trailers for all four films are included. —DAN

***Journey to the Far Side of the Sun* (Universal, 1969)**

D: Robert Parrish

W: Gerry Anderson, Sylvia Anderson, Donald James. C: Roy Thinnies, Ian Hendry, Patrick Wymark, Lynn Loring, Herbert Lom, Loni von Friedl, Franco De Rosa, George Sewell, Ed Bishop.

This was a rare foray into live-action science

fiction from puppet masters Gerry & Sylvia Anderson (*Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlet*). Like their famed signature shows, the special effects are employed through the clever and very impressive use of miniatures — often so well done they rival the CGI effects of today! Yet they have a charm that CGI lacks.

Filmed in the UK as *Doppelgänger*, American distributor Universal rechristened the film to the more adventurous, romantic *Journey To...*

Good move!

In 1969, Roy Thinnies was riding high in Sci-Fi circles due to his wildly popular ABC series *The Invaders*. Here he plays Col. Glenn Ross, the world's top astronaut. Along with scientist John Kane (Ian Hendry), he embarks on a six week journey to explore a newly discovered planet that shares Earth's orbit on the other side of the sun. What Ross finds there will intrigue fans of parallel universe stories!

Thinnies, a fine, underrated actor, is superb. He gets able support from great character actors such as Hendry and Patrick Wymark, though Herbert Lom is wasted in a glorified, undeveloped cameo.

Thinnies' scenes with then real-life wife Lynn Loring, playing his onscreen wife Sharon, ring false. Loring, a child actress on the long defunct soap opera *Search For Tomorrow*, plays the faltering Ross marriage as though she were still sudsing it for an audience of housewives in the afternoon. She's not feeling her character, and it shows.

The space travel sequences are lovely. At a time when effects had to be enacted before the camera, director Parrish and the Andersons create a dreamlike outer space that pulls the viewer in. A subtle, quietly haunting orchestral score works its magic to make the viewers feel as though they were along for the ride. These scenes especially resonated in 1969, the year of the first moon landing.

Journey to the Far Side of the Sun was a rarity among Sci-Fi films: a wholly original idea, something audiences hadn't seen before. Though a few of the film's talker scenes go on a bit too long, this intriguing, well-made story will hold the attention of viewers.

Universal presents a superb, letterboxed transfer of *Journey to the Far Side of the Sun*. There are no extras of any kind. A pity. Thinnies is still very much with us. An interview or a commentary track from him would have been nice, as would the film's MIA trailer. —DAN

***Manon Family Movies* (Calt Epics, 1974-1979)**

D: John Aes-Nihil

W: John Aes-Nihil

C: Rick the Precious Dove, John Aes-Nihil, Katie Lazarus, Knarly Dana, Krista Meth, Mr. Jacquetta, Judy, Ms. Male, Darny, Lori, Porn Michael, Miss Sheila Star, A.J., Miss Head.

Through an episodic series of 8mm faux-home-movies, director John Aes-Nihil tells the infamous



story of cult leader Charles Manson and his followers, from the establishment of their commune at the Spahn Movie Ranch to the brutal killing spree that took the lives of actress Sharon Tate, four of her house guests, and married couple Leno and Rosemary LaBianca.

Although not the equal of Jim Van Bibber's *The Manson Family* or the 1976 CBS movie *Helter Skelter*, two movies that actually had something to say about the subject, *Manson Family Movies*, with its verité simplicity, is a film of undeniable power.

Shocking, disjointed, and obsessively attentive to detail, *Movies* watches more like a theatric ritual, a magical working, than traditional cinema. The sense of invocation is strongly aided by the fact that there is no dialogue, leaving the amateur cast to improvise physically, aided by a soundtrack consisting of largely unreleased Manson Family music and location shots at many of the actual sites relevant to the 1968 murders, including the Spahn ranch, the Barker ranch, Cielo Drive and the La Bianca house.

For the casual viewer, the film may prove inaccessibly fetishistic but for devotees of experimental film and/or true crime, it is a must see.

The DVD from Cult Epics includes director's commentary, outtakes, LAPD crime photos, and an interview with Manson. —Nick Loukas

***The Signal* (Magnolia Pictures 2008)**

D: David Bruckner, Dan Bush and Jacob Gentry W: David Bruckner, Dan Bush and Jacob Gentry C: Anessa Ramsey, A.J. Bowen, Justin Welborn, Sahr Ngaujah, Chen Christian, Scott Pythress,

In the modern era of horror cinema, it's a rarity to find a film with an original plot and delivery as strong as its storyline. Considering all the remakes and unnecessary sequels, it's not hard to see why. But when this does happen, a cult classic is born. Unfortunately for *The Signal*, its potential never truly surfaces. Best put, the familiar adage "too many cooks in the kitchen" comes to mind.

The *Signal*'s plot is simple. An unexplained signal is transmitted from television sets, radios and cell phones causing everyone to go crazy. The end result is a blood bath. The story is broken into three parts, appropriately called "transmissions": "Crazy in Love," "The Jealousy Monster," and "Escape From Terminus." Each transmission is done by a different director.

While the plot is fairly basic, the storyline is a little more complex. "Crazy in Love" (helmed by David Bruckner) opens the film and introduces the three key players: Mya, the unfaithful wife, Jerry, the disgruntled husband and Ben, Mya's secret



lover. After sleeping with Ben, Mya comes home to find that not only are people on the street acting strange, but so are her building's tenants and even her husband. Chaos ensues and Mya's only option is escape. The film then follows her escape with "The Jealousy Monster" in which her husband goes looking for her, and "Escape From Terminus" with Ben searching for Mya.

The success of "Crazy in Love" is rooted in how well it sets the tone of the film. The pacing is perfect, the mystery of the signal is engaging and suspenseful, and the unsettling behavior of everyone who has gone crazy is extremely effective. This is really what hooks us into the film — the uncertainty of what's going on and how to deal with the situation at hand. These core motifs are what make any strong horror movie thrilling, but unfortunately as *The Signal* delves into its second part, "The Jealousy Monster" (by Dan Bush), everything the film had going for it is lost in its new direction.

It's not that "The Jealousy Monster" is done poorly that makes it an ill fit. It's the lack of momentum and the replacement of suspense with black humor that ruins it. With Bush's segment, the silly side of being crazy is explored and the audience is shown why the crazies think the way they do. Big mistake. Now the mystique of insanity is gone and we're left with a half-hearted explanation that doesn't belong.

In "Crazy in Love" when Ben starts losing his mind, he snaps at his friend who is playfully swinging a baseball bat (mind you, this is nowhere near Mya). He says to his friend "You almost fucking killed my wife." And when his friend protests, Ben says "You almost fucked my wife." It's this mounting tension that let's us know something bad is about to happen. But by dissecting it, "The Jealousy Monster" works against the formula that made its preceding chapter so tense. And while that

may not have been the point of "Jealousy Monster," it's impossible to ignore how it affects the overall outcome of the film.

"Escape From Terminus," the final segment of *The Signal*, (Gentry's segment) ties the plot together. It recreates the serious side of the first transmission and brings back the focus of the storyline, but by then the magic is gone and we're left with a lackluster finish. While the climax presents a situation where it's left up to the viewer to decide if we're shown the reality or just a hallucination, it comes at a time when the allure is already lost. "Escape" is by no means bad, but can't save the film from the second transmission.

While *The Signal* didn't entirely deliver what was expected, it should be noted that the film took a risk that most mainstream horror movies wouldn't touch. Despite it not working in the film's favor, an unconventional move in any horror movie is always welcome. Had the entire film been black humor, "The Jealousy Monster" would have served its purpose, but in the context we're given, it diffuses the ticking bomb that "Crazy in Love" had done such a wonderful job building. And the real shame is when that bomb does finally go off, it's a dud.

—Peter Scowey

Werewolf Shadow (BCI, 1972)

Dr Leon Klimovsky

W: Jacinto Molina (Paul Naschy)

Co Hans Munkel, Paul Naschy, Gaby Fuchs, Barbara Capell, Patty Shepard.

Another in Naschy's Waldemar Daninsky Werewolf series. This modern-dress entry is shot in Spain but set in France. As is often the case in Naschy's films, the obviously Spanish locales do not match the story's setting.

The Daninsky films are ongoing and *Werewolf Shadow* opens with a dead Daninsky lying in a creepy morgue, as two coroners ignore local legends



and remove silver bullets from the corpse's body. In a flash, Daninsky returns to life, and the two docs die a quick, violent death.

A while later, two occult students happen upon Naschy's isolated house. They're looking for the grave of the long dead, devil-worshipping vampire, Countess Wandessa Darvula De Nadassy. The lady with the lengthy, over the top name is played by American actress Patty Shepard.

The grave is found, the Countess is accidentally revived, and soon it's *Werewolf vs. the Vampire Woman* (the title used for the film's English-dubbed, Stateside release.)

Naschy gives a good performance and the proceedings are atmospheric. The grave-digging scene is particularly eerie, and the film makes good use of dry-ice fog effects. One such scene, set in the long, shadowy corridor of Daninsky's castle, is quite effective.

The Naschy output will never be anything more than B movies, but many of them remain harmless, horrific fun.

As with *Curse of the Devil*, BCI offers a decent but not perfect print of *Werewolf Shadow*. No trailer is offered, but you can watch the film with its English-dubbed track, or in Castilian with subtitles. If you're of a "certain age," you might enjoy watching the disc's other offering, an original release print of *Werewolf VS the Vampire Woman*. This dubbed, scratchy print may not be as clear as the Castilian version, but it does bring back warm memories of late night TV horror shows from the 70s & 80s.

For once, the dubbing comes close to matching the actor's lip movements! —DAN

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THE OCCULT WORLD OF DENNIS WHEATLEY

Courtesy of the Dennis Wheatley website; it's creator, the late Bob Rothwell; Richard Humphreys; and its current webmaster, Charles Beck. Compiled with additional material by Nick Louras.

Though little read today, Dennis Wheatley was once among the world's best-selling authors. During a career that spanned more than four decades and over six dozen books, the self-described "Prince of Thriller Writers" conjured vivid tales of Satanic cults, lost worlds, women in peril, daring spies, Nazi black magic, and Communist plots... sometimes all in the same novel!

Wheatley was born in London on January 8, 1897 to a family of Mayfair wine merchants. His early education was varied and would come to inform the patriotism, Epicureanism, and love of adventure present in his novels. From 1908 - 1912 he was a Merchant Navy cadet aboard the HMS Worcester, after which he traveled to Germany to study wine making. In September 1914, at the age of seventeen, he received a military commission and later fought at Cambrai, St. Quentin and Passchendaele during the First World War.

Injured, having survived a chlorine gas attack, he was subsequently invalided from the army and entered the family wine business. Following the death of his father in 1926, he assumed control of the company. At this time he also began to write short stories.

Following the failure of his first marriage, in 1931 he married Joan Younger, with whom he would remain for the rest of his life.

Wheatley's business was badly affected by the slump of the early thirties and by 1932 he was forced to sell up and came close to bankruptcy. As a diversion from his financial worries and with the encouragement of his new bride, Wheatley set about writing a full-length murder mystery that he called *Three Inquisitive People*. His agent's reader considered the book weak, though, and it would not be published until well into Wheatley's career. However, this book introduced the character of the Duc de Richelieu, a high-living, French expatriate residing in Britain, along with his friends, American adventurer Rex Van Ryn, English gentleman Richard Eaton and Jewish financier Simon Aron, who were to become Wheatley's most popular inventions.

While *Three Inquisitive People* was in the hands of his agent he set about writing a second book featuring the same characters, *The Forbidden Territory*, which was immediately snapped up by the publisher Hutchinson. This adventure story, set behind the Iron Curtain, had the Duc attempting to rescue his friend Rex from a gulag in the Siberian outland. It won immediate acclaim from

both the press and public. It was reprinted seven times in as many weeks, translated into numerous languages and bought for film by Alfred Hitchcock.

This book was followed by a string of thrillers and occult horror novels that, throughout the 1930s and 40s, propelled Wheatley into the category of bestselling author. As an avid reader himself, and fanatical collector of modern first editions, he was familiar with the work of authors such as H. Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle, William Hope Hodgson, John Buchan and his particular favorite, Alexandre Dumas, and was influenced in varying degrees by each. His early work seemed to be perfectly in tune with the spirit of the age, enforcing the virtues of imperialism in which he totally believed, and countering the rising threat of Communism.

In 1939 he became the editor of the "Personality Pages" of the *Sunday Graphic* and became a volunteer speaker on behalf of the war effort.

In 1941 he was re-commissioned and became the only civilian member of the Joint Planning Staff. With the rank of Wing Commander he worked in Churchill's fortress basement producing papers for consideration by the Chiefs of Staff.

After the war he moved to Grove Place in Lymington and continued his writing.

Throughout most of his career, Wheatley produced two novels a year although this later dropped to one, usually having a summer release.

With the popularity of paperback editions of his works, his sales rocketed. In the UK alone he sold over 1,000,000 copies of his books a year during the 1960s. Also in that decade, two of his titles were filmed by Hammer Studios and negotiations took place to turn some of his books into a TV series.

THE DEVIL RIDES OUT

Perhaps the most famous Wheatley novel was 1934's *The Devil Rides Out*. The third work to feature De Richelieu and his friends, and the second



published, this thriller found the Duc attempting to rescue his friend Simon Aron from the thrall of Mocata, a Satanist based on Wheatley's real-life acquaintance Aleister Crowley. His first foray into the theme of Black Magic, the novel featured a relentless onslaught of spiritual warfare, black masses, orgies, car chases, an air-pursuit across Europe, and the Devil Himself!

The occult was a subject that interested Wheatley tremendously, although he went to great pains to reiterate his belief that such forces were dangerous and not to be trifled with. He claimed never to have participated in any occult ritual himself. Rather, he attributed his knowledge to meetings and conversations with contemporary practitioners such as Crowley, Rollo Ahmed, and Montague Summers.

Although Wheatley hardly played fair with the beliefs of real-life ceremonial magicians, reducing their practices to a sort of Medieval Satan-worship, he clearly relished the ability to add verisimilitude to his novels by borrowing the terminology of existing

occult societies. For example, his high-ranking Satanists often bore titled ranks from the Order of the Golden Dawn and Crowley's own Argentum Astrum, such as Magister Templi and Ipsissimus. To these flourishes he added lurid depictions of ritual, sacrifice and sexual frenzy.

The Devil Rides Out would spawn seven more black magic titles: *Strange Conflict*, *The Ke of Gifford Hillary*, *To the Devil—A Daughter*, *The Haunting of Toby Jegg*, *The Satanist*, *They Used Dark Forces*, and *Gateway to Hell*.

It also spawned a rare and successful film adaptation, brought to fruition by actor Christopher Lee.

Lee met Wheatley while the author was giving a lecture on "Magic and the Supernatural" at the book department of Harrods in the early 1960s. Over the course of conversation, Lee obtained Wheatley's permission to approach a film company on the author's behalf with the intent of selling film rights to his books.

The company that Lee approached was, of course, Hammer Studios where he had starred in a string of internationally successful gothic horror films.

In 1967, *The Devil Rides Out* was brought to the

big screen. Lee, who had regularly played monsters (*Dracula*, *Frankenstein's creature* and the *Mummy* among them) stepped into the heroic role of De Richleau. Charles Gray played the villainous Mocata. The result is one of the finest films in the Hammer roster, and one of the few ever to be adapted from Wheatley's novels.

FILMS & SCREENPLAYS

Of the fifty-four published novels by Dennis Wheatley, it is surprising to find that only five were filmed. Unhappily, the making of two of these was dogged by continuous problems, and one became the swansong of a major British film studio. And if he was unlucky with the films based directly on his books, he was no more fortunate with the five original screenplays he wrote, none of which were taken up by a studio.

One of the main reasons why so few of his books found their way onto the cinema screen was that, on the whole, they were difficult to film. His historical titles in particular included battle scenes, complex plots and many different characters. Likewise, his occult novels had scenes that, until recently,

would have been expensive to shoot convincingly. Add to this the fact that although his books sold extremely well in Britain, Europe and throughout the Commonwealth, he never achieved a similar popularity in America.

Wheatley loved the cinema and counted a number of film actors and directors among his friends. He had made the film industry the subject of his second published novel, *Such Power is Dangerous*, and had a good understanding of how the film world operated.

One particularly good friend was the up and coming British director Alfred Hitchcock. Wheatley had been a guest on the set of many of his early films, and when *The Forbidden Territory* was published in January 1933, he presented Hitch with a copy. At a dinner shortly afterwards, Wheatley was pleased to discover that Hitchcock so enjoyed the book that he intended to direct a feature film of it. But this promising beginning was soon beset with problems and disappointments.

Hitchcock was just in the process of moving to Gaumont-British studios and taking up a contract to work for Michael Balcon, so told Wheatley to hold onto the film rights until such time that he could

Christopher Lee (foreground) as De Richleau, Paul Eddington as Richard Eaton, Patrick Mower as Simon Aron and Rosalyn Landor as Peggy Eaton in *The Devil Rides Out*.



persuade his new employer to purchase them. When the time came, however, Balcon wasn't interested and instead insisted that Hitchcock direct *Wálteres from Vienna*, a musical starring Jessie Mathews.

Unperturbed, Hitchcock then approached Richard Wainwright, a distinguished producer who had been head of UFA films in Germany and had recently relocated to Britain. Wainwright was keen to pick up a promising new subject for his first British film, and immediately bought the rights. Although there was a verbal understanding that Hitchcock was to direct, Michael Balcon refused to release him, and instead began production of the famous thriller, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Wainwright, committed to studio space, technicians and actors, had no alternative but to proceed without him and placed the film into the hands of the novice American director, Phil Rosen. This set-back was soon followed by another, when Gerald du Maurier, who was originally cast to play the part of the Duc de Richleau (renamed Sir Charles Farrington in the film), died before filming began and was replaced by Ronald Squire, whom Wheatley considered a totally inappropriate choice for the role. On its release in November 1934, it was denied a West-End premier and attracted little attention.

In his autobiography, *Drink and Ink*, Wheatley laments this missed opportunity: "If only Hitch had made it, Hollywood might have bought the rights to every book I wrote thereafter. But it was not to be."

Two years later in 1936, one of Wheatley's most popular novels, *The Enmeshment of Stamboul* was filmed as *The Secret of Stamboul*.

Richard Wainwright once again produced it, and Andrew Marton, a Hungarian who later achieved fame directing the chariot race sequence for the 1959 remake of *Ben-Hur*, directed. It starred a young James Mason alongside Valerie Hobson. The inclusion of Hobson probably helped it gain a US distribution as she had already appeared in a couple of Hollywood films, including *The Bride of Frankenstein*, the previous year. It was finally released in America under the title, *The Spy in White*.

Around this time, Wheatley wrote an original screenplay entitled *His Gauding Star*. This long and complex script of well over thirteen thousand words is an amusing light comedy/thriller similar in tone to Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes*, and like that film is stuffed full of stereotypical English types and incompetent foreigners. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that it was ever seriously read by a studio.

In 1936, at the instigation of Hitchcock, Wheatley

wrote another screenplay, *The Bombing of London* (published in *Gummen, Gallants and Ghosts*, 1943). Throughout the thirties, he was utterly convinced that in any future war with Germany, London would be destroyed within minutes by bombing, and felt that the government should wake up to this fact and take rearmament seriously. However, relying as the film industry does on finance from big business, the project could find no taker as the subject was considered to be too controversial and likely to cause the public undue alarm, and as a result, the screenplay was shelved. Interestingly, the same year, Alexander Korda released *Things to Come*, based on H.G. Wells' futuristic novel, in which a major war breaks out in 1940 and the towns and cities of Britain are completely destroyed by aerial bombing!

Three years later, at very short notice, he was asked to submit a screenplay for Albert de Courville's film, *An Englishman's Home* (USA: *Madmen of Europe*). Much to his annoyance, it was rejected, but when the film was finally released in 1939, he was given a credit along with a number of other writers, although how much, if any, of his script got through to the final version, is unknown.

In his two collections of short stories, *Mediterranean Nights* (1942) and *Gummen, Gallants*



and Ghosts, Wheatley included two further film treatments, *The Terrorist*, and *The Fugitive King*.

The Terrorist was actually read by Angus McPheail, the head of the story department at Gaumont-British studios, who reported enthusiastically on it, but Wheatley had specifically written the lead role for the actor George Arliss, who had complete script approval, and he unfortunately, rejected it out of hand. *The Fugitive King* is a scenario rather than a completed film script, and is based on the second and third chapters of his biography of Charles II, *Old Rowley*, which tells of the young king's flight across England following his defeat by Cromwell at the battle of Worcester.

The Second World War put a sudden stop to any further projects by Wheatley regarding the cinema, and it was only with the burgeoning British horror film industry of the 1960s that producers once again became interested in his work.

Towards the end of 1963, Hammer Films acquired the rights of Wheatley's occult novels, *The Devil Rides Out* and *The Satanist*, but it wasn't until four years later that filming began on the first of these. By that time, Hammer had also bought the rights to another Wheatley classic, *The Haunting of Toby Jugg*, and had put into production *The Lost Continent* based on his 1938 "lost race" adventure

Uncharted Seas. With the film industry showing so much interest in his work, Wheatley believed that very soon studios would be queuing up to film the rest of his books. This, however, was not to be.

Uncharted Seas was a hokey mess and *The Devil Rides Out* flopped in America where a new wave of modern occult horror was emerging, typified by Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and later by William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973).

Following the failure of both of their Wheatley projects, Hammer was loath to invest more money in the other properties it owned, and although for a short while it seemed as though *The Haunting of Toby Jugg* might finally be made, in the end, this too fell through.

But although failing on the screen, Wheatley's novels were still selling by the millions and this prompted Hammer to consider making a television series called *The Devil and all His Works* which was to comprise of twelve sixty-minute adaptations of his occult stories. But yet again this idea never got beyond the initial planning stage.

By this time, Wheatley had become a close friend of Christopher Lee and made over to him, at no cost, the rights to a number of his occult novels. With these properties under his belt, Lee formed his own short-lived production company, Charlemagne,

which, following a failed first venture with the film *Nothing But the Night*, was dissolved in 1975.

By the mid seventies, in the wake of the phenomenal success of *The Exorcist*, subjects dealing with the occult were big box office, particularly if the storyline also involved children, and hoping to capitalize on this, Lee offered the rights of *To the Devil—A Daughter* to Hammer.

They readily accepted, and in September 1975, the film went into production with a mixed cast of notable British actors such as Christopher Lee, Honor Blackman and Denholm Elliot, alongside the highly regarded American actor Richard Widmark.

Again, there were production difficulties! Widmark, who had script approval, demanded a number of changes and on a couple of occasions threatened to walk out. When the film was eventually completed, the studio cut the final scene in which the satanic Father Michael (played by Lee) is struck by lightning, down to a bare minimum and refused the money for it to be re-shot. The completed film bore little resemblance to Wheatley's original story, and is best remembered today for featuring a then-15 year old Nastassja Kinski naked and for being the last film ever made by Hammer Studios.

So unhappy was Wheatley with the final result that he refused to allow Hammer to film any more

Charles Gray as Mocata in Terence Fisher's film of *The Devil Rides Out*.



of his books and in effect vetoed the making of the film's sequel, *The Satanist*, which was to have starred Lee again and Orson Welles.

With the release of *To the Devil—A Daughter* on DVD, interest in Wheatley's work may take an uptick. Christopher Lee is keen to reprise the role of Dr Richleus in a new version of *The Devil Rides Out*, noting in the audio commentary for the original that he is now closer to the correct age for the part. There is little doubt that with modern techniques in special effects, *The Devil Rides Out* could be adapted far more literally today.

But whether this happens or not, there is much excellent material to be found in Wheatley's books that would translate perfectly to either the cinema or television, and the plots of many of his occult novels could quite easily be updated to a modern context with no loss of integrity.

We shall have to wait and see.

OUT OF PRINT

Wheatley's work falls into a number of distinct categories. There are the series novels, books that involve the same central character or characters more than twice. These are: Duc de Richleus; Gregory Sallust; Roger Brook; Julian Day. There are ten non-fiction titles, two collections of short stories, four crime-dossiers; and eighteen "out of series" titles. The theme of black magic, which would come to be a Wheatley signature, appeared in books both in and out of series. In addition, Wheatley also edited two major collections of short stories for Hutchinson as well as a series of paperbacks, "The Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult," and wrote innumerable articles.

During the 1960s and 1970s Wheatley's work had phenomenal sales. Information from Hutchinson compiled in 1972 for UK sales alone records that his eight black magic books had an average annual sale of 80,000 copies per title. His remaining (at that time) 59 books, all of which were in print, recorded average annual sales of 12,000 copies per title per year. These combined rates give an annual total of over one million copies a year in the UK alone. To satisfy this demand, Hutchinson produced massive initial print runs of his books. *Gateway to Hell* (1970) had a first print run of 200,000 copies. By the time of his death in 1977 it is estimated that Wheatley had sold in excess of fifty million copies of his books worldwide.

It is interesting to note then, that thirty years after his death, his books have all but disappeared from bookshops. Where, at one time, W. H. Smith displayed shelves of his titles, now there are none.

There are a number of reasons for this. Wheatley's work is firmly fixed within the white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant imperialism of the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries.

He makes no bones about proclaiming the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race above all others.

There are many instances of sadism in his work, primarily directed at women.

Satanism (the left-hand path) equated in Wheatley's mind with socialism (the political left). As with many writers of this period, his leaning towards the extreme right of politics was seen as

providing a bulwark against the encroachment of the extreme left into literature as typified by the publications of Victor Gollancz and the socialist intellectuals of "The Left Book Club."

He praises both Mussolini and Franco and, cringingly, refers to Hitler in *Red Eagle* as "His Excellency." In the Gregory Sallust war stories he makes Hermann Göring a largely sympathetic character. In Göring he saw an upper middle-class epicure and hero of the First World War with a strong sense of duty and nationhood, yet a man who could still share a dirty joke. These are the qualities that Wheatley possessed and admired in others.

Accusations of having fascist sympathies were leveled at Wheatley in the 1930s with some justification, but unlike other writers, most notably Henry Williamson, he never allied himself with the fascist cause in Britain. His political views were essentially Conservative, albeit to the right of that party. From a distance, he admired the tough stance of Italian and Spanish fascism, its patriotism and its pro-active anti-communism, but always recognized that fascism was essentially a foreign phenomenon and counter to the British way. He loathed Oswald Mosley, whom he condemned unreservedly as a traitor, and his tireless and unique work for the Joint Planning Staff during the war, demonstrated beyond question that his loyalties could never stray from the liberal democracy which he saw manifest in the established British political system.

Wheatley's gushing patriotism now seems completely out of step with the post colonial sensibilities of a modern, multi-cultural Britain. But in banking back to an era of certainties, his work can provide solace to a people who are, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, struggling to come to terms with an increasingly nebulous national identity.

For readers unfazed by the politically incorrect (and those well steeped in the attitudes of the Golden Age pulps) Wheatley is a revelation. His novels create a world of luxury, danger, lust and excitement. His characters all live life to the fullest, fighting evil at every turn — often with the fate of nations and souls in the balance — while finding time for cocktails and cigars.

Amongst his massive output, there are true classics. *The Devil Rides Out* is one of the great occult novels of all time. *Strange Conflict*, *The Ka of Gifford Hillary*, *The Golden Sparrow* and *The Haunting of Toby Jugg* all serve to illustrate his talent. His historical research was impeccable, adding vivid color to his Roger Brook series, set during the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries.

The sun may have set on the British Empire, but the work of Dennis Wheatley still manages to engage interest, and collectors are pushing the prices of his early books higher with every year that passes.

In his private life, Wheatley was a charming man with a boyish sense of humor and much loved by those who knew him. His religious convictions were

not orthodox, leaning as they did towards Eastern philosophy and a belief in repeated reincarnation. He did, nevertheless, seek to lead a Christian life and had enough humility to be genuinely touched by the praise that was heaped upon him. It was only towards the end of his life that he stopped replying in person to every letter written to him by his many fans, continuing to reply, however, to those that he considered were of a serious nature. In spite of the colossal tax burden of the 1960s, when the royalties from every four out of five of his books sold went to the exchequer, he remained steadfastly in the country he loved, and although he was for many years Britain's most successful writer, received no public honor.

EPILOGUE

Wheatley died of liver failure on 10 November 1977 at the age of eighty leaving behind him a massive body of work. He was cremated at Putney Vale and his ashes were buried at Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey, under a tree near the entrance.

Just before his death, Wheatley received conditional absolution from his old friend Cyril "Bobby" Eastaugh, Bishop of Peterborough. In a brief note of thanks written in a wavering, almost illegible hand, shortly afterwards, he reinforced his belief in reincarnation:

"Our friendship has been a long one but I am convinced that it will continue eternally and that we shall meet many times elsewhere."

For the rest of us, it is Wheatley's books that await rediscovery.

For more information, visit
www.denniswheatley.info



pleasure is a P-O-R-R-I-D-G-E

by Holly Doy

the genesis p-orridge interview

If ever a person has tried to live life by their own standard, it has been Genesis P-Orridge. There are few people in the sphere of pop culture who have exerted the kind of influence and inspired the kind of controversy that P-Orridge has.

A musician, performance artist, occultist and writer, P-Orridge was born Neil Andrew Megson in Manchester in 1950. He played a singular role in the creation of industrial music (in the 1970s, helped found the magical order TOPY (The Temple of Psychick Youth)) in the 1980s, and has advocated and experimented with body modification, going so far as to transform his gender.

Perhaps best known as a founding member of the bands Throbbing Gristle, Psychic TV, and most recently, Thae Majesty, P-Orridge has synthesized the influences and philosophies of such luminaries as William S. Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Dr. Timothy Leary, John Cage, and legendary occultist Austin Osman Spare, of whom P-Orridge wrote the book, *Stations in Time*. Throbbing Gristle (consisting of Chris Carter, Peter Christopherson, Genesis P-Orridge and Cosy Fanni Tutti), and later, Psychic TV, built many of their own synthesizers and electronic devices in order to create the sounds that commercially-available keyboards could not yet produce, splicing magnetic tape with scotch tape in order to build loops and use samples in their music.

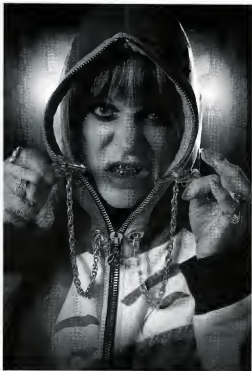
Since 2000, P-Orridge has been on the road again with both Psychic TV and Throbbing Gristle, proving once and for all that the now-senior set of Chris, Cosie, Peter and Genesis have no problem holding their own against the younger acts dominating the industrial music scene.

In 2007, P-Orridge suffered the devastating loss of his wife, Lady Jaye. The two had augmented their bodies to resemble one another as closely as possible with the goal of becoming one single being. Despite this, P-Orridge is still on the path of musical exploration. With a new album from the reactivated Psychic TV/PTV3, *Mr. Alien Brain Vs. The Skinswalkers* (Cargo/Sweet Nothing Records), coming out this year, Genesis P-Orridge took the time to speak with *Penny Blood*.

PENNY BLOOD: Where did the name Genesis P-Orridge come from?

P-ORRIDGE: Oh, that question again? It was 1965 and quite a lot of my school friends went to a party together. I couldn't go to the party and they decided, when they were a bit stoned, to play a game. So they wrote down the names of all the people they knew on one column, and then they put Biblical names next to them that they felt were appropriate. And they put Genesis next to my name. And it was the only one that stuck. And that became first my nickname and then I started to sign poetry and artwork and paintings with "Genesis," and it just stayed.

That was in '65. Then, after I dropped out of University in 1969, I spent part of my time living on somebody's kitchen table, because I had no money, and the only thing I could afford to eat was porridge. So whenever people did see me, which wasn't very often—I only weighed about 85 pounds at that point—they only saw me eating porridge. And one of the people whose apartment it was was this kind of beatnik poet-type named J—, and he came in really drunk and



high on LSD one night, and said, "Your name's not just Genesis—it's Genesis P-Orridge, and the P stands for Willow, but it's spelled Pillow." He was in this really aggressive and angry mood, even though he was high, so I just said, "Okay, J—, yes, it's P-Orridge." And that was it.

And then in 1970, I decided that since everyone knew me as Genesis P-Orridge, and no one really knew my original name anymore, that I might as

well do it legally, and make it more exciting, just to see what happens when you did it with bureaucracy. I went to see a lawyer, and the lawyer said, "That's hilarious! I'll do it for free!" So I changed it legally in 1970. So that's the name on my passports and everything. That's my actual name.

PENNY BLOOD: Music has been around for perhaps 45,000 years, even before people could comfortably get food and shelter and procreate. Why do you think music is such a priority to the human experience?

P-ORRIDGE: That's a really nice question, and I do have some thoughts on that. I would say that music actually predates language, obviously, and I would think that it goes back much, much further than 45,000 years. One could argue that music really begins with the mating calls and mating sounds of all the living creatures, going back millions of years. Obviously, dolphins and whales have very sophisticated systems of sound for communication and for fornication and flirtation. That might seem like a strange place to begin, but with the earliest human beings, the shaman of the clan or the group, the wise woman or the assigned shaman, would mainly be concerned with protection from animals, from predators, and with success in hunting. So for signaling purposes, they would learn bird songs so that they could communicate position and so on for hunting, and from that stage, be developing what would become language.

Ultimately, it is really important to remember that language is music. It's just as effective—sometimes, in a way, more complex and more true to the information than what we usually think of as language: English, French, German, or so on. So you've got this first requirement of how to communicate in a natural environment among other creatures without being spotted as a predator of them. That, in its turn, is used for mimicry in order to hunt and gather food. This is where I think that 45,000-40,000 years comes from. Interestingly, it wasn't much before that that the concept of linear time also occurred. Up until then, people did not know that there would be another summer, that there would be another daytime after it went dark. It's hard to imagine that now, but there was this complete inability to conceive of reliable future events.

Naturally, it was women who discovered linear time, because of their menstrual cycles and pregnancy. There's a lot of discussion about that, and the consensus that I tend to agree with is that women kept secret, for quite some time, that they'd learned about linear time. The first way that they understood linear time was not just by their menstrual cycle, but even more importantly, but by the ability to attribute a particular child to a particular father. Before that, they just knew that there was this mating that happened. People did not understand, and again, until about 40-45,000 years

ago, had no idea that there was a connection between the grunting mating that happened sometimes, and then way on down the line, there's a baby. That somewhere, in that system, in that first early society, the women noticed amongst themselves that when red-haired Ug had the mating ritual with one of them, they would end up with a red-haired baby that looked like Ug. So they figured it all out. And that became important because, for the first time ever, people had foresight. They were able to then start to understand that they could, to some degree, predict when the buffalo, or whichever animals, would be migrating their way again. They were able to start to plan when things would happen that they would need more fuel for heat at a certain point during the year because it would get cold again. They became aware of linear time. And this is incredibly important, the crux of all different aspects of culture,

this moment, because it's also when people became aware of mortality. It's the moment where, once men were given the secret that they made babies that were of themselves, and that they had sons and daughters that came from them particularly, specifically, they then wanted to control women in order to try and be immortal. To try and cheat Death.

Now, this may seem as though it's not necessarily relating to your question, but it is, because we then have a situation where, with linear time, and the ability to predict and foresee moments of significance—which would be birth and the understanding of death—people began to do burial death rituals. Before that, they just left people where they dropped, or where they dropped off to, just like

animals do. So it's a tremendously bad and vibrant blossoming of human consciousness and self-consciousness.

They had already learned mimicry of certain animals in relation to hunting, and perhaps they would learn mimicry of animals they wanted to eat, with gestures to discuss going and getting something to eat, or making noises of things that could kill them in order to suggest they hide or find a defensive position. All this was going on, and the wise women and the shamans—the old people were naturally considered to be the wisest, because they had experienced

the most repetition of events—were

gradually cast in the role of the oracle for the tribe. At that point, they would want to make good things—things they needed to have happen—happen again. They wanted, as we still do, to somehow control their environment. They wanted to reassure themselves that they could get food again; that there was a possibility for the human species to have and to exert some degree of control over natural events, and over the environment and over each other. That would be the time when people would spend time in their caves, around the fires, and as language developed from the necessity of finding food and safety, the wisest people would start to remember, through the use of bird and animal noises. They would try to build a language from sound to communicate, entertain, and educate the rest of their clan. The hunters would want to boast about their successes, and remember the deaths of their heroes and their comrades, so they would act out, by moving and stamping and gesturing and using noises that were commonly understood, to make things happen again. In the end, music was basically a magical system to try and ensure survival and to make things happen again that were required for survival. That's where it all started.

PENNY BLOOD: You've done a lot of work with tonal and atonal sounds in music? Why do you think certain sound and note progressions sound "right" and others sound "wrong"?

P-ORRIDGE: I've thought about that a lot over the years—let me see how to approach this. Through work, in particular, in working with Tibetan musicians, whose music is fundamentally devotional, and is not in any way intended to be entertaining. The way I really finally understood it was when I was in the Himalayas themselves, and I was walking along a tiny path with a 5000-foot drop on one side, and a sheer cliff on the other side, and right at the top of this mountain in the Himalayas was perched a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. And I was wondering, why the Hell did they put it up there, apart from being

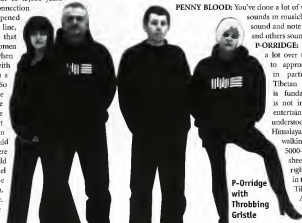
P-Orridge
with
Throbbing
Gristle

Photo: Paul Hartfield

PENNY BLOOD



Photo: Industrial Records, LTD



close to the gods, which really isn't their thing. However, as I was walking up this path, struggling, they were playing music from one of their great, big, long, deep pipes, which make this incredible deep, low sound, and another monk was playing one of those very, very high-pitched pipes, which just sort of grates on your ears, it's so strange-sounding, and then there were all these clanging cymbals going on at the same time. As a musician, I was very quickly aware that there was no logical structure to this, but I could feel the frequencies of the deep tones in my feet, and the high notes were exciting me, and the clanging was



Photo: Michael Barrett, LTD

jangling me into a state of sensory wakefulness. So the Tibetans' use of music was celebratory—they were actually doing music that was to inform all the other villages and monasteries in the area that somebody was approaching their monastery. And, in fact, their music sounds different when you're up there, because the air is thinner. You actually hear it differently. And it was at that moment, I actually turned to my friends, and I said, "This music is site-specific!" They had made these instruments to resonate with the landscape, and even with the air, the tones of the air. It was incredibly sophisticated in its relationship with the landscape. But it was atonal. And so I asked the monks why the music was so apparently random, and they explained it to me in a really interesting way that I thought was amusing and supportive of my own theories about musicianship. They said, certain instruments are assigned to certain deities, or demons, or philosophical trains of thought, so they're attached to various ideas and various real or symbolic entities, and so their sound is—if you like—a sonic equivalent of a graphic, a glyph, a symbol or something, and that certain monks, at certain times, over the years, play different instruments. Novice monks are allowed to played certain instruments regardless of their skill, because, as a novice, the entity which they're under the protection of, or who they're amplifying the concept of, goes with the pipes. So instruments were assigned based on your age and your level of understanding of the Scriptures, and they have nothing to do with skill whatsoever, which I thought, was remarkable. And, of course, even if you become really, really good at playing one of the gigs after X-number of years, you change your functions in the monastery chain, and you're given a different instrument. And then you play that. And I found that an incredibly fascinating, and also a very liberating idea, because it does reinforce what I believed right from the very, very beginning of my career in the early 60s, which was that non-musicians are equally as valid as musicians. Skill has its place, and traditional technique has its place, but there was to be, always, an acknowledgement contained within—in my opinion—within the production or the composition and the performance of music that accepts the intrusion or the possibility of random chance of the unknowable.

So to get to why some things sound difficult, and other things make us feel nice, a lot of that is cultural education, it's cultural inheritance. In Africa, we would grow up and we would be used to one particular system of scales, and likewise in

China—and these don't sound the same, and to those musicians, the other sounds atonal. There are many, many, many interpretations of how sounds fit together, and geography is one of the main reasons that the evolution of sound has been so miraculously varied. And in the same way, the people who play music now are the descendants of shamans. Once again, shamans developed what we think of as music, Song and rhythm. Dancing with a stick with bells on and chanting your feet to a particular beat so that there are different rhythms, and then adding in words and sounds and spells to make things happen and to invoke. Those were the first songs, and those were the first storytellers, and that's where everything comes from. So all music began as devotional music, and all music began with the purpose of making things happen, to make things change or heal, and also to be the voice of their own particular people.

Having said that, we are—you and I, for example—we are from the West, America and Britain, where



there's a very, very particular, and, in fact, dynamic fusion; a very dynamic hybrid that's happened in this back-and-forth of music between the two countries, where Britain, initially, would have European classical music being gradually converted into popular music in the United States; African music, and slave music were being converted into popular music, and those two hybrids then became another hybrid when the British tried to interpret what they felt the Americans were saying, and then the Americans tried to interpret the British interpretation of the Americans. It can get complicated.

PENNY BLOOD: Why is human music so attached to rhythm?

P-ORRIDGE: First of all, a good way to begin rethinking or reminding oneself of rhythm is to ask, what is a rhythm? And the only answer, really, that one can give in terms of a definition, is: any sound that is eventually followed by another. So, if I hit a drum today, whenever another drum is hit, perhaps even in billions of years' time, with the same intent, and theoretically by me—that would be one beat of a rhythm. So a rhythm is just a recurrence of one strike, one beat.

Obviously, the early rhythms were based on the human body. Again, this was probably a matriarchal discovery. The rhythms of the infant or the organs of the body, the heartbeat, you know? You put your ear on the belly of the person that's having a baby and you hear the heart beat. You know that that signifies life, and when that's not there, it's death. And so that beat, the heart beat, is the beat that says, "We recognize new life," and it's also the beat that says, "We recognize being alive," and it's also the beat, in its absence, that says, "We recognize and understand that death has occurred." That's the first rhythm. It's that simple.

And then, from that, the early rhythms would also be based on the speed of the feet of certain animals running. There would be the sounds of people moving through brush, so that you've got the sound of twigs snapping, and you've got all those things, those moments of mundane but very important daily life. These were the origins of rhythms.

Now, what happened, as rhythms began to occur, was first of all, language also appeared, the cadence of language—as language was the first form of recording, with stories and epic poetry to remind the tribe of things from their own history. People found it easier

to remember huge chunks of history and all the names and all the events if it had a nice flowing repeating rhythm. So, for the reinforcement of poetry, rhythm became the servant of oral history. It's much easier to keep talking and saying the things that repeat and make themselves happen if you have a rhythm. It just works that way. What also was discovered was that the heartbeat will tend to follow a beat on a drum. So if you have a bass drum, with very deep beats, and you do it on the heartbeat of somebody, and then very slowly, you increase it, and increase it, normally, the heartbeat of that person will follow, will try and match the beat of the drum. So

when that becomes known, then the idea of being able to manipulate the emotional response of your audience comes in. You can use the rhythms to make people excited. You can use deep rhythms to make them afraid or high rhythms to make them shrill and scared or incredibly excited and giggly and so on. So the rhythms, at the beginning, were a counterpoint, in terms of tribal culture, to the epic oral poetry tradition of the keepers of the history of the tribe.

The shaman, in all the different cultures, also used the rhythms to create trance, and that's another fascinating area that has resurfaced. There's been a resurgence of fascination with trance music in the last 20-30 years, especially with techno and raves and so on. And a lot of research by various DJs and people who were interested in trying to make

contact with and study some of the still-available forms of trance music which was functional. There's a split in music, sometime around the Middle Ages, I guess—let's see, in terms of rhythm, I have to be careful we're not sidetracked too much—so with rhythm, I guess, once we had what was once for the rich aristocrats, the dukes, the duchesses, the kings and queens of the courts, is the beginnings of what is now downloadable MP3—pop music. Popular music for the masses, if you like, began as elite music for the rich. And then, the other sort of direction for music was functional music, metabolic music that was deliberately intended to affect the body and release hormones, endorphins, and maybe be used in conjunction with intoxication in order to commune with spirits, of which, obviously, voodoo was a good example.

The one thing that I've always wanted to put out there for people to think about is how music affects people. You know how you talked earlier about why people feel good or feel differently with atonal music, with certain types of pleasing major chords and so on? I also became interested in the area of why do people sometimes, with more modern music, like rock music, why did people rip up the seats in the cinemas and go crazy? So I started to ponder on that. That was another reason why I was researching different cultures and thinking about frequencies, and it started to seem quite clear that frequencies were also fundamental in the effect of music on an audience. For example, look at a church in the Middle Ages—the aristocracy and the Holy Roman Empire, which is now the Catholic Church, but at that time, was a huge parasitically empire with lots of politics between all the kings and queens of the various European countries. But the Holy Roman Empire wanted to enforce its doctrine on the population of all these disparate countries, which had previously had their own post-triath pagan religions, ones that grew out of what we talked about at the beginning: hunting and predators and so on, magic. Apart from building many of their churches and cathedrals right on top of what were previously pagan temples and worshipping places, they also understood, to a level which is quite phenomenal, how to set a building, to create a building that could completely get the congregation to be as vulnerable as possible to the indoctrination. And, if you're going to one of those beautiful huge old European cathedrals, you've got this fantastic design where, with the old, old, old pipe organs, you've got these deep, deep, deep notes, just like in the Himalayas with the Thetans, that coughed and resonated and vibrated the floors and the walls, and also, at certain frequencies—one of them is around 7.8 beats per minutes, which is the same frequency as the human body frequency from the base of the spine—they would have that sound amplified through all these stones, and all these angles of the cathedral, so that an illiterate peasant, sitting on those pews, would feel physically vulnerable and physically as if their body could disintegrate, because, at the right intensity, those low frequencies break down the cell wall. So that's almost like the softening up of a place with the artillery before the army goes in! Then you have the high frequencies, which, again, you also get with Tibetans, and that's the choir, and you have these

incredibly high, high, high notes that also bounce around and are so pure—because people were literally castrated to get the notes high enough—that they released very particular hormones in the brain, hormones which are psychedelic, basically close to Ecstasy, the drug—lots of serotonin, lots of senses, visionary and joy and blissful surrender. And then all the stained glass windows are set up so that on the High Mass, on a Sunday, the sun's coming through these bright, bright, bright colored pieces of glass, and playing across people's eyes, just like a light show with a stroboscopic effect. So you've got basically the same thing you might get later at a rave—a psychedelic light show, the heat, the deep, deep, deep bass, and the very, very tight top with very little middle, and right when you've surrendered and you're immersed in this incredible blissful but intimidating rush of hormones, the priest will then slap in whatever indoctrination message they missed for that week. "You must do exactly as your superiors say, because that's God's plan!" or whatever—I'm not in any way talking slides, I'm just saying that's when people are the most vulnerable to indoctrination. The only thing that would make them more susceptible is if they had an orgasm at the same time.

So it's a remarkable sonic system for giving the congregation a truly otherworldly, visionary, heavenly experience, which completely overwhelms them in comparison to the squalid, poverty-stricken, stressful daily life, especially in the Middle Ages. It's a fantastically sophisticated technique. So I was interested in the fact that churches are basically organized religion's raves. And then, I was thinking, well, what about when Elvis Presley was dancing and running around and the audience would go crazy and the girls would squeal and scream and they would rip up the chairs and people would faint and have this quasi-religious fervor, and that, to me, well, it's exactly the same thing! And, especially as PAS got more effective, you've got bass, and then—with the screams included—you've got high frequencies, and you're basically releasing the endorphins of—you're overloading the excitement centers of the brain and the body with these huge waves of extra endorphins and they have to be released! So often, a hand might be on stage thinking the audience was going crazy because their songs were so good, but really, it had nothing to do with them at all! It was just that they had lots of high and low frequencies happening, vibrating the space. So there's a long tradition of physical manipulation of the audience in order to create hysteria.

PENNY BLOOD: Do you remember what drew you originally to music and being in a band?

P-ORRIDGE: Well, my father was in bands when he was young, before World War II. He was a drummer in jazz bands, so I grew up around drum kits and I started playing the drums when I was three or four years old. And I took piano lessons and I was in the cathedral choir in Stockport, so I used to do all that complicated Medieval singing in the church, wearing those red and white

robes. I was a pretty little choir boy. [Giggles] Innocent, I was.

So I started out listening to loads of jazz. I used to see Duke Ellington and Buddy Rich and Count Basie and those hands when they came to town. I lived in Manchester still. But then I started hearing records by the Rolling Stones sometime around 1962, and I thought that was fantastic. So I became a Rolling Stones fan first—in the days when Brian Jones was still in the band, and they were doing interesting songs for the time. There was a pirate radio station called Radio London, and then there was another one called Radio Luxembourg that was coming out of Europe, and they were the only ones to play new, modern music, and my friends and I would listen to these stations almost exclusively.

One day, one of my friends called Spidey came up and said, "You're going to have to buy this album by this band called the Velvet Underground. You'll just love it." So I did. I bought it the day it came out—*The Velvet Underground and Nico*—and that was the really, really sort of liberating moment for me. I'd already started listening to John Coltrane and John Cage and started to lose interest in form in its traditional way, and then I heard the Velvet Underground with the electric viola and I was smitten. Smitten with the possibilities. And also the fact that the lyrics weren't just "I love you, you love me, you don't love me anymore." It was more like journalism. The lyric was liberated, too, in many ways. It also gave me the sense that you could actually take any topic at all, and it was valid to become some form of song where the lyrics were a piece of music.

PENNY BLOOD: How did that background translate into what you did with Throbbing Gristle?

P-ORRIDGE: Well, when I was still in school from 1966 to 1968, I already recorded lots of tapes. I started recording tapes when I was 16, doing cut-ups and loops and feedback and so on. I was already utilizing tape recorders as instruments from the age of 10. I'd do that pretty much every other day. All the time, I was experimenting with tape. And then in 1969, I joined a performance art group in London. When I left University, I went to London and joined this group called The Exploding Galaxy. Actually, a book just came out about them. It was like a psychotherapeutic commune of artists, so it was very much



Photo: Nick Wadley/Calder

PENNY BLOOD

to do with challenging anything that was normally accepted. For example, if somebody was still using the original name that they got when they were born, people'd say, "Well, why have you still got that name?" And then, "Why have you got hair?" And "Why have you not got hair?" "Why do you eat with a knife and fork?" and "Why do you eat?" and "Why do you eat that?" It was a kind of constant questioning of things. Nothing had to be the way it was last time. That was a really good discipline.

From that experience, I ended up doing my own performance artwork with COUM Transmissions, which was very much in the art world, and that was the material that it was about. Eventually, it came to with transgression and sexual taboos, identity as a fictional narrative, the idea that male and female were really as arbitrary as anything else. I basically took the earlier ideas of The Exploding Galaxy and became even more rigorous with them, in a sense, chopping up every aspect of consensus reality and then reassembling it in unexpected ways. Very much a collage approach, but to one's own personality and one's own world. So we would invent characters, like cartoon character ideas, and then make a costume and then live that character, and you would have to answer questions in the voice of the character, from the point of view of the character, and walk and behave like the character, and you might do that for several days until you switched costumes, and you'd have to be somebody else, and go into that character. It was very tough, but it was fascinating. Some people literally had sort of semi-nervous breakdowns because they were unable to let go of all their preconceptions. But a lot of people are still in touch with me that went through that process with me, and it was incredibly positive for them in terms of dealing with all sorts of aspects of their lives since. They're really good at focusing on the real issues, and improvising and being very pragmatic. It's given them a real strength in that area.

So that was what was going on from '69 to 1975, and then in 1975, with COUM Transmissions, we'd started adding in sound, tape collages and ambient sound tracks and bits of newspaper reports, bits of television news, to emphasize aspects of the performance art pieces. That's when it became Throbbing Gristle. And there were four of us at that point there was Slezay (aka Peter Christopherson), Cosey (Fanni Tutti), Chris (Carter), and myself. And we just started to become more and more interested in the power of music and its ability to have a direct effect on the mind and body. So we started to look at Tibetan music, where they use certain frequencies to release endorphins, and ritual tribal music where they used specific patterns of drumming to induce trance states, and thought we had found a way to do that kind of music, but make it totally relevant to modern post-War and pre-technological society. We wanted to find a way to do an equivalent tribal music for European industrial culture. And so that's what we started to experiment with, first in our basement. We built our own speakers. We built all our own amps. Chris even built his own synthesizers and effects pedals. We started to just experiment with rhythms and loops and noises,

and record everything, and listen back to it and whichever bits we just felt we liked we would see if we could copy them and do it more than once. So for the whole of 1975, we did that for 3 or 4 days a week, just constantly experimenting with sound, and building equipment.

One day, I was walking through the park in Hackney in London with my friend [and future Psychic TV guitarist] Monte Cazazza, and we were talking about the music, the Throbbing Gristle music, and I was saying, "We've got to have a name for this music. There's already dada and surrealism in art movements, and this is, in a way, a music movement, or it could be, so it has to have a name." Because it always makes things more effective when you inject them into popular culture—it's just one of those facts of life. So we were walking on, and I was throwing all

the audience at the front, and later on, there were times when I came to meet them as the bands that they became, they all told me about that show being one of the reasons that inspired them to become the bands that they were. That was the gig that inspired them. In the film *24 Hour Party People*, they talk about the Sex Pistols playing at that club, and how that inspired Tony Wilson, but in fact, the Manchester bands were inspired even more by the Throbbing Gristle gig at the Hacienda Club.

And still to this day, people in Manchester tell me about that, that they were there, and that was the pivotal moment that they all felt, "Well, you really can have a band and play anything." It doesn't just have to be punk but rock'n'roll. It can be really different. And so it opened up their imaginations, which was exactly the point—to me, anyway. Art of any kind—music, writing, film, performance—should be about inspiring people to believe that they themselves can do something new, and that their imagination is valid, and that their energy can be shared with people who they'd otherwise never meet, just through being creative. And that's the only reason I still do things, because sometimes, it still happens. People tell me after a show that they're really inspired, or that we've changed their life, or it's reminded them of things that they've nearly forgotten, because life is so repressive in this particular society, because people are so busy trying to pay their bills that they've forgotten about things like change and evolution.



Photo: Paul Huxford

these ideas at Monte, and I said, "Well, we could call it 'factory,' because of Andy Warhol, but really it's more about industrial society," and I was saying all these things, and he said, "Gen, you keep saying 'industrial.' That's obviously what it's meant to be." And so it was him that pointed out to me that I was stating the obvious, and I hadn't really realized it, and that was the first time that music was called "industrial music." Which is unusual, very, very unusual, if not unique, to have a new genre of music named consciously, and know the day that it happened, which was the 3rd of September, 1975. From then on, there was industrial music—before, there wasn't.

PENNY BLOOD: Was the Manchester scene supportive to you and your endeavors?

P-ORRIDGE: Actually, yes, although I was living in London most of the time I was doing this. Manchester was always one of the places where people really liked us straightaway, and we always used to get good crowds. The third time Throbbing Gristle played in Manchester was at Tony Wilson's Hacienda Night Club, that one in the movie *24 Hour Party People*. In fact, one of the first bands to play at that club was Throbbing Gristle. I remember Joy Division, Spiral Carpets, and the people who became the Happy Mondays, they were all there in

PENNY BLOOD: You use such a wide assortment of instruments and sounds in your music, it must be difficult to replicate the music exactly when you perform live. Do you bring your equipment over with you when you tour?

P-ORRIDGE: Only guitars. The club has to help provide the back line of amps and stuff, because it would be impossible to bring anything more. So we just bring guitars, and sampling keyboards—you know, the minimum.

PENNY BLOOD: And then you have to trust the baggage handler not to destroy them.

P-ORRIDGE: Oh, don't say that! Especially with sampling keyboards. If they decide to drop them, so much could be lost. I mean, we've got these ridiculously thick flight cases for the keyboards, but even so, you never know.

PENNY BLOOD: It's always fun to sit on the plane and watch the baggage handlers throw things into the luggage compartment.

P-ORRIDGE: No, it's not fun. I don't enjoy that at all. It's very scary for me.

PENNY BLOOD: The last couple of times I've flown, I've put everything in a plastic bag I could carry on with me that they could see through and tell that nothing was in there but my laundry.

P-ORRIDGE: Oh, I like to do that. I always put the stinky laundry on top, so if they decide they want to look through the suitcase, I've made it as unpleasant as possible for them. I find the smelliest sock and put it right there on top of the pile. It worked, once—stopped a search completely. The third time I went

to Poland, when it was still a Communist country. I bribed a soldier to give me his uniform, which, of course, technically could have been seen as espionage. I was a bit reckless back then, when I was younger. So anyway, I had this uniform in my bag, when I suddenly realized I had to go through the Polish border, and the East German border. So I put the uniform in a bag of laundry, and then I put my stinky socks and things all on top, and when they came and started looking through my things—they did look in the bag, but put it down really quick. It was just a plastic bag full of laundry, so they weren't expecting to find a uniform at the bottom, and I just sailed through Customs with the uniform without incident.

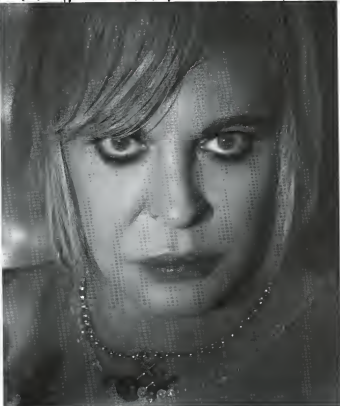
PENNY BLOOD: What brought you to the United States, and what keeps you here?

P-ORRIDGE: That's a good question. I'm actually trying to think about where to go next, to tell you the truth. I think a lot of people are going to leave, if the next presidential election goes sour. I'm already looking for other places. But I came here because I could do everything I wanted and not be attacked. I was left alone. In England, it was just becoming impossible to do anything. The newspapers were just printing all these ridiculous articles about me being the most evil man in Britain, that I was corrupting the minds of the youth—and I hope I was—from their perspective, anyway. And it was just becoming impossible to do anything. They were opening my mail, they came and took away two tons of my archives from the house and destroyed it. It was clear that they were just going to keep on and on and on attacking my lifestyle, until I was incapable of doing anything. And so I thought, "Okay, I've been here forty years. That's long enough to be in any one country. I'll go somewhere else!"

So first of all, I went to Thailand and Nepal, and in Nepal, I worked with Tibetan refugees spending most of the money I made out of record sales on helping to put together small hydroelectric schemes for monasteries in the mountains and in the little villages. You can do it for about \$5,000, because they have so many streams coming off the mountains. You basically just put a big, metal tube in the stream, with a small dynamo in the middle, and you get enough electricity for light bulbs in the village and to warm and sterilize water, and then they don't have to cut down the trees. So I was doing that while I was being accused of being evil in England. [Laughs] Kinda funny. I spent a lot of time meditating with the Tibetan monks and finding my own place in the world.

PENNY BLOOD: Well, you weren't converting the little brown people. That's why England thought you were still evil.

P-ORRIDGE: Right! I wasn't being a missionary. I was listening. And no, they were converting me! There was one day when I finally found out that while I'd been in Katmandu, my house had been raided and all this stuff was taken. So I went and saw one of the Tibetan refugees, and I said through a translator friend, "Guess what? I'm a refugee in exile, too, now." And we both burst out laughing, and had a nice cup of Tibetan tea, and it didn't seem so bad. You know, I'd spent six months with all these other refugees who had had much worse things happen to



them, and it kept it in perspective. And then I was sitting in the hotel room, and the hotel was owned by Tibetans, and as soon as they heard what happened to me, they said, "Hey, you can stay as long as you want for free. You've been nice to us for six months, and now we can take care of you."

So I was reasonably safe—and I had my children with me, too—and I was thinking about everything, and I noticed that there were some letters that I'd picked up as I was leaving England, and had just thrown into my suitcase but never looked at them. And so I was opening these letters, just trying to process what was going on, and I opened one of them from Michael Horowitz, who turned out to be the man who was taking care of the Timothy Leary archives. And inside his envelope was a little postcard with a letter on it, and it said, "If you ever need a refuge, call this number." And I just looked at that, and thought, "How weird! How did he know I would need a refuge six months ago?" So I rode back into Katmandu, found a phone where you could phone internationally, called his number, and he answered and said, "Just come over. You can stay with us for as long as you want." So I thought, "Okay! I guess that's

where I'm meant to go next." So that was how I ended up in America. I just followed the signs.

I lived in his spare bedroom for about six months with my two children. I raised money by helping with some raves in San Francisco—it was kind of the beginning of the rave movement there. It had just started about a year before, maybe less. And one of the rave kids came up to the house one day—they found out where I was staying, and turned up at the house—and said, "We want to help you get somewhere to live, so we're going to do a couple of raves, and you can have all the money." It was extraordinary! That's what I'd been hoping people would get back in England, you see, that you make a difference with your art, where sometimes you're helping someone out with money or whatever through your creativity, and then later on, that person may be able to help you out through their own creative endeavors. There really is this much more exciting version of everyday life that comes from living like this, if you just surrender to the nonlogical, the illogical version of reality—the magical version of reality, to put it in a very simple way.

Burning Chrome

Hell Ride and the Return of Biker Cinema

An Interview with Larry Bishop by Marc Shapiro

It's been four decades since *The Wild Angels*, *Glory Stompers*, *The Savage 7*, *Angel Unchained* and *Chrome And Hot Leather* pretty much marked the beginning and the end of the outlaw biker movie craze. By 1973, when these B-movie epics roared off into the night, the counter-cultural phenomenon had run its course.

"I really didn't think there was still life in the biker genre," declares Larry Bishop who cut his early acting teeth on the latter three films plus such neo-biker classics as *The Devil's 8* and *Wild In The Streets*. "I never would have thought that anybody would be interested again."

Bishop punctuates this remark with a laugh that, translated into English, says "Hey, I was wrong!" for the actor/writer/director is currently scant weeks removed from four standing-room-only screenings of his latest project, *Hell Ride*, at Sundance. A return to the rough old days of biker cinema, the film is an indication that there is still a passion, or maybe just a sense of nostalgia, for bad boys on bad bikes.

"It occurred to me back when I was making *Angel Unchained* and *The Savage 7* that somebody down the line would remember those movies fondly," says Bishop. "When I did them my parents didn't talk to me for a long time and Richard Dreyfus and Rob Reiner, who I had gone to school with, looked at me like I was nuts to make those movies. But I was an 18-year-old kid at the time who was into the whole grindhouse experience and James Dean and Marlon Brando. I got off on the fact that those biker films were considered so disrespectful by so many people. And with *Hell Ride*, I tried real hard to be faithful to that disrespectability. *Hell Ride* is not going to get the Good Housekeeping Seal Of Approval and there's no reason why it should."

The origin of *Hell Ride* began back in 2001 when Bishop, the son of the late, great comic-actor and infamous Rat Pack member Joey Bishop, received a mysterious midnight phone call.

"It was an actress I knew named Laura Cayouette," recalls Bishop. "She said she was standing right next to Quentin Tarantino and that he was my biggest fan. Now by 2001 Tarantino was a fairly famous cat and so that kind of blew my mind. I had done a couple of gangster movies recently, *Mud Dog Time* [his directorial debut] and *Underworld* [which he

wrote and acted in], and so I said to Laura, 'So he liked the gangster movies?' She said 'No, it's those motorcycle movies you did like four decades ago.' So she puts Quentin on the phone and we talk for a while. Finally he says 'Would you like to come up to my house and see a mint print of *The Savage 7*?'"

Bishop said sure and on the appointed night he made his way to Tarantino's place and into the filmmaker's private theater where, as advertised, a truly pristine print of *The Savage 7* played out.

"Now I'm no schmuck," chuckles Bishop. "I knew Quentin didn't just invite me up to his place to watch the movie. So when the lights came up, I turned to Quentin and said 'Okay, what do you want to do?' He obviously knew what he wanted to do. He said 'We're going to make the greatest motorcycle movie ever.'"

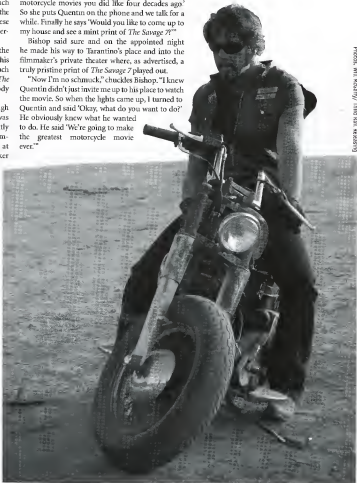


Photo: Will McGarry/Third Rail Pictures

Bishop admits to being slightly taken aback by Tarantino's statement. He knew the filmmaker had the clout in Hollywood to get the movie made. "But at that moment I didn't have a story idea or a script or anything. I never in my wildest imagination thought it would come up. Let's be honest, a biker movie was an odd one to try and get made [at the time]. There hadn't been one in 40 years and I didn't see people clamoring for another one. But Quentin insisted that it was my destiny to do another motorcycle movie. So that night I started writing *Hell Ride*."

While not blocked, Bishop felt he needed a kick-start to get his biker attitude going. And so he met with Tarantino a week after the screening and talked the concept out. "He came up with this notion that I would act in it as well as write and direct and that my character should be called Pistolero. But at the end of the meeting, he basically wanted to see what I was going to do. He didn't want to interfere with the script or know about it."

With Tarantino's encouragement, Bishop went away and, over a leisurely four year time frame broken up by an acting gig in *Kill Bill*, he emerged in 2006 with a finished script.

Hell Ride's story initially appears cut from the classic genre cloth. Pistolero, the leader of The Victors biker gang, has vowed revenge for the murder of one of their members by a rival gang called The 666ers. With trusted members The Gent and Comanche at his back, Pistolero chases down The 666ers and their notorious leaders Deuce and Billy Wings. But this seemingly simple revenge tale takes an unexpected turn when members of The Victors begin to question Pistolero's true motives and a revelation regarding Comanche forces Pistolero to deal with the ghosts of his past.

Yes, there are the expected elements... lots of willing hot biker babes who do it at a moment's notice, lots of violence and action.

But Bishop offers that there is much of Sergio Leone's spaghetti western influence and no small amount of philosophy woven into the *Hell Ride* story. "I'd say it's a classic biker story with an existential spin. I threw everything into it. In hindsight, I probably overloaded the script with all kinds of meanings. I've always been a fan of movies where you had to go back and see them a couple of times just to pick up the nuances. Yeah all the expected biker stuff is in *Hell Ride*, but at its core, the movie is about believable characters and

motivations. Let's face it, you've got to have a solid story or you have nothing."

Some questions inevitably arose during the scripting process about just how much Bishop could get away with in terms of sexuality and violence. The Weinstein Company, who put up the reportedly two million and change to make the film, insisted on an R rating for the expected theatrical release.

"When I was writing the script for *Hell Ride*, I started thinking back on the old biker films I did in the 60's," says Bishop. "In those days, we really couldn't do the sexuality the way we wanted to. But I felt with *Hell Ride* we could do the sex in a way that was more real and true to how bikers and their women really behaved."

Bishop once again turned to Tarantino for guidance. "I asked Quentin, 'How far do you think I should go?' The script was really graphic when it came to the sex. The sex scenes were really rough. But, as it turned out, we ended up with some really great actresses who were willing to go the distance as far as the sex went. Quentin said that I shouldn't censor myself, that I should just do it and that we would worry about everything in the editing room."



Casting *Hell Ride* turned out to be an exercise in 'cool' that one has come to expect from a Tarantino-produced film. Along with Bishop as Pistolerio, the cast toylines Michael Madsen, David Carradine, Dennis Hopper, Eric Ballfour and Winnie Jones. Also along for the wild ride are Laura Cayouette, Leonor Varela, Michael Beach and Julia Jones.

While trying to stay true to his 60s roots, Bishop found that the depth and complexity of the *Hell Ride* script required more than mere stunt casting. "When we did movies like *The Savage 7* and *Angel Unchained*, we would have like three real actors and real biker gangs working as backup. You could get away with a biker who wasn't a real actor delivering a line or two. But when I was writing the script for *Hell Ride*, I realized that you really needed actors even for the small parts. I was afraid of the cumulative effect of having so many scenes in which lesser characters delivered a line or two."

Bishop got lucky in that all his major players had some riding experience. When it came to the lesser stars, Bishop remembers having specific casting

requirements. "They had to be actors; they had to have their own bikes, they had to ride them really well and they had to be bikers that fit the tone of the movie. We interviewed a lot of people but at the end of the day we got really lucky."

Hell Ride began production in May 2007. Originally slated for a 30 day shoot in various Southern California desert locations, Bishop got so caught up in the idea of doing an old style biker picture that he voluntarily reduced the schedule by ten days. "I started remembering the rhythms of the way we would shoot in the old days. And all those films were shot in 20 days. I knew what could be shot in the course of a day. I had promised The Weinstein Company that I could do this in 30 days but I decided that we were so prepared that it could be done in 20 days. As soon as I told Bob Weinstein that, I realized that I would be left alone for 20 days. But if I went a day over 20, the money people would start coming around wanting to cut scenes. So just before we started shooting I told my crew that what we would be shooting was truly impossible but that we were

going to make *Hell Ride* in 20 days."

Any fears that Bishop could pull it off vanished shortly after filming began. "Two days into the shoot, I was confident that I could have done it in less than 20 days. I had a great cinematographer; I had really prepared a tight shot list. We had great locations set up so that we could move quickly."

This helped because the desert did not always cooperate and, as the *Hell Ride* production found out, the gods could get angry. A seemingly never ending wind storm hampered filming during the first week, as did the regular 60-mile-an-hour wind gusts and 105-degree desert heat. But the overall tone of the production remained upbeat. Ballfour, the only lead actor with no riding experience, learned to ride just prior to the start of filming and aced the real life exam. Madsen echoed the sentiments of other actors when he explained that acting on a Harley made the process a lot more fun.

Bishop acknowledges that despite the wind and heat, *Hell Ride* finished on time and on budget.



Michael Madsen as The Gent

"What can I say man? We got real lucky all the way down the line. I guess you could say I sort of experienced a 60s flashback while making this film. It was real easy for me to get back on the bike and wear the colors. And directing myself was no problem at all."

One concession to budget and scheduling did concern some cast members. "We really didn't have the time to go back and look at dailies at the end of the day so I just didn't. Michael [Madsen] and Dennis [Hopper] were always kind of concerned that we weren't looking at dailies. Every once in a while I would go back to my trailer and they just assumed that I was going back to watch stuff so one day they asked me about it. I told them that when I went back to my trailer, it was because I had to take a leak.

That seemed to satisfy them. I knew what I was doing and that I was in synch with both directing and acting."

Throughout the conversation, Bishop peppers his talk of *Hell Ride* with references to the 60s. He remembers visiting the infamous Sharon Tate house two months after the Manson killings. He once drove the stretch of road in which James Dean had his fatal accident. In the classic sense, Bishop waxes nostalgic for those days.

"If you're about my age, then you experienced the late 60s in a way that few people will understand. It was a great time. The free love sex thing was happening. The drug thing was happening. There was rebellion. But after the Manson killings and what happened at Altamont with the Stones and The Hells Angels, the 60s

changed forever."

But for Bishop, in a sense, it was nothing new. "My father was part of The Rat Pack: Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra and a whole group of people who lived their lives outside the law. That's where I kind of got into the idea of things that were less than respectable and outside of what people considered mainstream culture."

Which is why, by age 18, Bishop had taken his act to what many perceived as the wrong side of the tracks: a contract with then-notorious American International Pictures. There he starred in juvenile delinquent movies like *Wild In The Streets*, opposite Christopher Jones and Richard Pryor. But he fondly recalls that it was his trio of biker pictures that opened his eyes to a different culture.



Dennis Hopper as Eddie "Scratch" Zero

"We shot *The Savage* 7 in Searchlight, Nevada and *Angel Unchained* in Phoenix Arizona," he remembers. "There were a lot of free spirits roaming around those movie sets. The bikers we used as extras on those films were very generous with their girls. They liked me and were very generous in giving me their women. It was like 'Here, take her and do what you want with her.' On both of those films I really scored a lot with biker women. But then that was pretty much the way things were. I had a real strong friendship with the actor Don Stroud and we'd give each other girls all the time."

"And it wasn't just the women. Drugs were a big thing on the sets of those biker films," he says. "I was getting high all the time on the sets of those movies."

But despite all the good will being offered on those sets, the director stops short of saying he was a favorite of the real-life bikers. "I would hope I was. I always felt real comfortable with them. But I guess that's what happens when

you're raised in an environment of gangsters like I was. The outlaw bikers in those days were really existential people. They would work all day for us in exchange for all the beer they could drink. I know you're going to find this hard to believe but they were actually sweet. When they wanted to be nice they could be really nice. But there was a line you just could not cross. If you were respectful of them, they were very cool people. Bikers in those days were just interested in experiencing the day."

Bishop's thoughts return to the present and the reality of the fact that between 1983 and 2004, he was apparently in career free fall with no credits in that period to mark his passage. "You know it's funny. I was not acting during that period but it was actually when I made the most money in my entire life. I was writing all the time, getting things optioned and getting these real big development deals. It was a different mindset then running around as an actor. I was getting six figure deals for a draft of a script that

never got made. Those things happened all the time. But I had a family at the time so my ego was able to deal with it."

He is presently more than capable of dealing with a sudden resurgence as a triple-threat director/writer/actor. He is currently in pre-production on a gangster movie entitled *Sweating Bullets* that will go before the camera by the end of the year. But the hoped-for success of *Hell Ride* is never far from his thoughts.

"I've always seen *Hell Ride* as a trilogy and I already have some ideas for the second story. Obviously the first one has to make money for there to be a second one. But I think there's a lot that can still be done with these characters and this lifestyle. I realize that if *Hell Ride* is successful then a whole bunch of people will be coming in to do their own biker films. It will be like when *The Wild Angels* was big and I got to do all those other biker movies. If it happens, it will be like that all over again."

"All I can say is that I hope that they're good." Y



Larry Bishop (right) with Michael Madsen

The Man Who Shot Everything

Cinematographer Gary Graver

by Harvey Charttrand



Editor's Note: In 2004, *outré* film director Curtis Harrington, whom I interviewed several times as he attempted to revive his long-dormant career, suggested that I speak to Gary Graver, the veteran cinematographer he had lined up for his next project — what would have been the first film version of Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Man of the Crowd*. Although Graver accumulated several hundred credits over a 45-year career, he is best known as Orson Welles' chief cameraman during the Great One's terrible final years — a dreadful shambles of wine and whisky commercials, walk-ons in bad pictures, movie trailer voiceovers, talk show blather, magic tricks, unsold scripts, unfinished directorial projects, lost footage, escalating obesity and declining health. Stepping out from under Welles' hulking shadow, Graver enjoyed a varied and prolific career, and — to make ends meet — had a sideline as a director of classy porno movies, using the pseudonym "Robert McCallum" for these triple-X efforts. (The best of the "McCallums" — 3 A.M., made in 1975 — features an infamous lesbian shower scene edited by Welles, supposedly to repay a debt to Graver.)

So I contacted Graver and he agreed to an interview. Although lengthy intervals separated our telephone conversations (delays I attributed to Graver's non-stop schedule and protean output), he couriered me samples of his short subjects, feature-length films, documentaries and works-in-progress, which I viewed enthusiastically. I later discovered

that Graver was also battling throat cancer at the time.

During our freewheeling talks, Graver discussed several low-budgeters he directed in the hopes of breaking into mainstream films (these B pictures included *The Boys*, *Moon in Scorpio*, *Trick or Treats*, *Evil Spirits*, *Crossing the Line* and *The Attic*); rarities that he worked on with Welles; collaborations with Spanish horror king Paul Naschy; and the prolific American B-movie director Fred Olen Ray, and such cinematic oddities as *Free Grass*, *Dracula Vs. Frankenstein*, *Doctor Dracula* and *The Mighty Gorgo*.

Screenwriter William Martell reports on his Sex in a Submarine blog that Graver did second unit work on John Cassavetes' *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974) and Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *The Color Purple* (1985). Graver shot *Grand Theft Auto* for Ron Howard in 1977 and was cinematographer on over 200 movies, directing more than 100 himself. He did second unit or additional photog work on "zillions of movies," Martell writes.

In 2000, Ray Manzarek, The Doors' keyboard man and a graduate of UCLA's film school, asked Graver to serve as cinematographer on his underrated thriller *Love Her Madly*, based on a story outline by the band's debauched lead singer Jim Morrison.

"I had a sense while I was making the picture that I had a winner," Manzarek told *Penny Blood*. "I had great actors, a great cameraman — Gary Graver, who worked with Orson Welles. Gary had so many ideas on how to set the mood. I told him, now we're into

the darkness, and he would light the darkness. Gary was just a great lighting technician. He contributed to the beauty of every single shot in the picture. His wife, Jillian Kesner, was the production supervisor, running around with clipboards and paper. She did a fabulous job too. They're a great couple."

Since the Manzarek interview was recorded, Gary Graver died of cancer on November 16, 2006, at his home in Rancho Mirage, California. He was 68. Eighty-year-old Curtis Harrington died on May 6, 2007, at his home in the Hollywood Hills, of complications related to a stroke he suffered in 2005. And Graver's wife, Jillian Kesner (a former actress and martial artist), died of the combined effects of leukemia and a staph infection on December 5, 2007, at a hospital in Irvine, California. She was 58.

These macabre circumstances may account for the fragmentary nature of this fascinatingly disjointed interview with the late Gary Graver.

GRAVER: I've been working with some good people lately. I'm making documentaries. I did an extensive interview with Clint Eastwood. I also talked to Frank Marshall, Paul Mazursky and Steven Spielberg. I did a short film with Dennis Hopper called *Chad Midnight* — a dance film with Hopper narrating. In 2004, I produced and directed a Japanese infomercial with Meg Ryan. It was a one-day shoot that cost a million dollars! Now and again, it's nice to work with people who aren't in the lower echelons of movies.

I am planning two feature-length films: *Fay the Devil and Drowning Women*. I am redoing my very first film — *The Embracers* (1966/also titled *Hollywood and The Sundowners*). I'm in the movie, so I shot a new ending with me in it, 40 years later. It's a black-and-white film, but these new scenes are in color. I'm also working on something called *A Gary Graver Movie*, about all the movies I have made that got wrecked by producers and distributors.

I have a little company called *Grand Illusion* and I shoot, direct and produce. I just produced a couple of movies: *Ray of Sunshine* (2006) and *Murder on the Yellow Brick Road* (2005). I'm getting to be like Orson. I've got eight or nine projects going at the same time.

PENNY BLOOD: Let's talk about some of the people you've worked with. What was Russ Tamblyn doing playing an aging biker in *Satan's Sadists* (1969)? A few years earlier, he was starring in *Tom Thumb* (1958), *West Side Story* (1961) and *The haunting* (1963). What accounts for his descending career arc?

GRAVER: In 1969, I did some second-unit work on a film called *Free Grass*, which reteamed Russ and Richard Beymer for the first time since *West Side Story*. I was surprised to see them both appearing in

PENNY BLOOD

this very low-budget film. After his contract ended at MGM, Russ dropped out and became an artist. He made a couple of experimental films in 16 mm. Then the hippie era came along, Russ became a hippie and moved to a smaller house in Topanga Canyon. He didn't work in movies for a long time by his own choice.

We had a *Satanstoe* reunion not long ago at a theatre here in town. Russ didn't want to go at first. I said... come on. Once I got Russ up on stage after the screening, he didn't want to stop talking!

PENNY BLOOD: Cameron Mitchell has one of his last leading-man roles in 1978's *The Toolbox Murders*, playing an apartment superintendent who murders his tenants with a variety of home repair appliances. Discuss your experience working with Mitchell.

GRAVER: In 1971, Cameron Mitchell wanted me to go and shoot a weird western with him at a ranch in Texas. [Titled *The Dream of Hamish Mose*, the film was never finished. —Ed.] Cameron and I had several meetings, but I was working with Orson on *The Other Side of the Wind* (1972) and I just couldn't do it. Cameron apparently talked over the entire soundtrack while directing, and so the film never got past the workprint stage. It was too hard to put it all together afterwards. Too bad. That was the only picture Cameron ever directed. In 1978, I worked with Cameron again on *The Toolbox Murders*. He was a strange cat. Cameron ate a lot of garlic to prevent heart disease, but he was a chain smoker, and eventually died of lung cancer. Then I worked with him again in 1979 on *The Island of the Fishmen* re-do for Roger Corman. It was retitled *Screamers*, with a new 10-minute intro added in which Cameron played a pirate. A friend of mine, Miller Drake, directed those scenes. We shot at Bronson Caves and off Malibu at night.

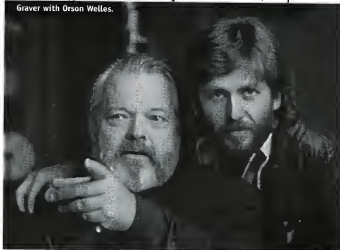
In 1989, I directed Cameron in a film called *Crossing the Line*. John Saxon and Vernon Wells were also in it. *Crossing the Line* was a motocross picture, set in a small steel town in Pennsylvania. That's why we shot it in Johnsbury... That's a joke! The film was financed by South Africans, so we had to shoot it there.

Cameron worked all the time, because he gambled all his money away. He had some bitter divorces and lost his beautiful home in Santa Monica. He moved to a small apartment and drove an old car. He would go to Hollywood Park Race Track and lose his shirt. He lost at the track all the time.

In the early nineties, I heard that Cameron was ailing. I interviewed him about working on *The Other Side of the Wind* with Orson. Cameron's face had gotten a lot thinner but he was still smoking. That was the start of my documentary called *Working with Orson Welles* (1993). And it was the last time I ever worked with my friend Cameron Mitchell. He died in 1994.

PENNY BLOOD: How badly was

Graver with Orson Welles.



The Boys, the film you directed with Cameron Mitchell, tampered with by its producers and turned into a travesty called *Texas Lightning* (1981)?

GRAVER: I told Cameron I wanted to make this movie called *The Boys* and he agreed to do it. I gave him a script and he said, "I'd like you to talk to my son about playing my son in the movie." I said sure. I didn't ask Channing Mitchell to read for the part, but I was very happy with his performance. Then the producers reshot the ending and Cameron would not come back for those new scenes. He was very firm about that. He didn't want them to change the ending. He said the original ending was one reason he did the movie. *The Boys* was eventually released as *Texas Lightning*. The producers test-marketed the title and found out it was highly commercial, even though it has nothing to do with the story.

PENNY BLOOD: I understand the original cut of *The Boys* was found and is being released on DVD

this year. What series of events led to this happy outcome?

GRAVER: I am now releasing the DVD of *The Boys* through my Grand Illusion company. I own the picture and will make my own DVDs of it and sell the DVDs online. I think *The Boys* is the best film I ever directed, but you know something? You can go out and make a movie in 35 mm, color, with a great cast and everything (like *The Boys*), but unless you have the money to publicize it, no one is going to know about it.

PENNY BLOOD: Tell us about working with Lon Chaney, Jr. on his final film — *Dracula Vs. Frankenstein* (1971). Chaney played Grotto, a retarded manservant, and he certainly looked the part. Was Chaney in bad shape when you met him?

GRAVER: I was glad to work with Lon because I am a big horror film fan. I saw all of Lon's Universal Pictures as a kid. But he was in bad shape when I worked with him on *Dracula Vs. Frankenstein*. Lon was very much overweight and craggy-faced. He drank this "Seven Up" all day long. It was a clear Eight Liquid, but I don't think it was Seven Up. It was vodka. Lon was still a trouper, though. He did good work. Someone always had to go to pick him up. One morning, they found Lon, almost drowned in his bathtub. They got to him in time. I guess he passed out in the tub after a few too many drinks.

Lon and I got along really well. I have a picture of him giving me a great big kiss on the cheek. He was at work every day. He just grunted and groaned. Lon could talk, but he was playing a mute in *Dracula Vs. Frankenstein*. Once we shot all night under a pier in Malibu.

Welles in *Orson Welles' Magic Shaw*, photographed by Graver.



Graver (with camera) on the set of *Moon in Scorpio*.



On the way home from the shoot, Lon was sleeping in the back seat of my car. The other guy with me wanted to stop at a little place in Malibu and get a beer. I woke Lon up and asked him if he wanted to go for a beer with us. He said no. Lon did not want to be seen out in public or in a bar.

PENNY BLOOD: Describe the differences between the original cut of *Moon in Scorpio* (1987) and the film that was eventually released after the producers drastically recut it. Do you think the original cut of *Moon in Scorpio* will ever resurface?

GRAVER: I have a workprint of *Moon in Scorpio*, but I don't own the rights to the film, so I can't release my own Director's Cut of it. I made this picture with Britt Ekland, William Smith, Robert Quarry, John Phillip Law, James Booth, my wife Jillian Kesner... I had a really great cast. I made the picture for \$150,000 — all shot on a boat in 11 days, even though Orson had advised me never to shoot a movie on a boat, because he had trouble when he made *The Deep*. I did it anyway. People got sen sick, but I loved being out at sea and I was very happy shooting *Moon in Scorpio*.

It was a weird Lovecraftian story. It started out with a vampire (Britt Ekland) who gets on a ship. She has scales on her back like a fish; she's sort of a fish-vampire. John Phillip Law's character has nightmares about Vietnam and dreams that the boat is being overrun by Vietnamese killers. Very weird. But the producer, Moshe Diamant, wanted "Halloween on a boat!" So a good script (by Robert Aiken) became a lousy one.

I cut *Moon in Scorpio* in my own cutting room in the studio behind my house. I turned my cut in to Trans World Entertainment (TWE) on Sunset Boulevard. Then I had to go to Tokyo to do a program on Orson. When I came back, they'd given *Moon in Scorpio* to another editor, who told them

adds narration for idiots...

So *Moon in Scorpio* was released and made \$1.2 million all over the world, and TWE was happy. As for the casting, I originally asked for Ursula Andress, but she didn't want to work on anything at that time, so the producers suggested Barbi Benton. I didn't think she'd be right. Then we got Britt Ekland. Perfect!

PENNY BLOOD: You've lensed 31 movies directed by Fred Olen Ray. Are you guys on the same wavelength? How do you rate Ray as a director of exploitation films?

GRAVER: I think Fred is excellent at what he does. He is very well organized. Fred likes to try lots of different things, like *Evil Twins* (1992). It's a horror film that's got animation in it. He does great casting. Fred loves to work with older actors. He's worked with people like David Hedison, Huntz Hall, Gordon Mitchell... Fred is a big film fan. He hires these actors and gives them work. He always makes sure he gets an 8 by 10 shot of them with him. Fred is like me. He has a whole brain full of B-movie trivia rolling around in his head. My sensibilities have always been with foreign films and really fine, well-made American pictures. I am sort of a film snob in a way. I read *Sight and Sound*, *Films in Review*, *Cineaste*... But I come from both spectrums of the film world. I like to make the little quick movies too. I made 31 pictures with Fred from 1986 to 2000. Fred doesn't just make horror films, you know. He makes erotic films and family films like *Invisible Moon* (1997). He even makes Christmas films. Fred can do anything. I think his best film was *The Shooter* (1997), a western with Michael Dudikoff and William Smith.

I made 30 pictures for Andrew Stevens, the actor-turned-director. Andrew has produced 20 of Fred's pictures. I was doing a picture a month — all three-week shoots. At the end of the shoot, we'd be

Graver served in Vietnam in the combat-camera unit.



given a script and start again the following week. And everything that Andrew Stevens made had a home already; in other words, he didn't just make them and then go out and schlep around trying to sell them. All his films were requested. A lot of them went through Roger Corman. So we had quite a prolific period in the late nineties.

PENNY BLOOD: You recently worked with Paul Naschy/Jacinto Molina on *Tomb of the Werewolf* (2004), also directed by Fred Olen Ray. Were you pleased with your collaboration with the Spanish horror icon?

GRAVER: I made two films back-to-back with Paul Naschy. The other one [*Countess Dracula's Orgy of Blood* (2004)] was for Don Gilt. It was a very horror movie. Naschy was actually a much better actor than I thought he would be. He had a few big dramatic scenes where they put him in that old werewolf costume again. Most people over here don't even know who he is. But Don Gilt brought Naschy to L.A. Fred saw the opportunity to nab him for another picture while he was already here. Paul was great to work with. He didn't speak English, but my assistant cameraman spoke Spanish, so we were able to communicate.

The trouble is, the low-budget B-movie market is drying up as the major studios make \$150-million comic book films and exploitation pictures with lots of mud and violence. How can we compete with B-movies with A-budgets? We live in an era of mega-budgeted exploitation films. The loss of the drive-ins ended a whole school of exploitation filmmaking. Now if you make a low-budgeter, you go straight to video or sell it directly to one of the cable networks.

PENNY BLOOD: You were director of photography on the only film ever directed by producer George Edwards — *The Attic* (1980), a psychodrama starring Carrie Snodgrass and Ray Milland.

GRAVER: I actually directed *The Attic*. George Edwards produced it and co-wrote the story. He is the official director on the credits, but George often left early to go home and feed his dogs. He'd get started, but then drift away and sort of let me take over. I set up all the shots, directed the actors and staged the scenes. Even when George was on the set, he'd let me do what I wanted to do. Ray Milland thanked me for directing him in the picture. He was as nervous the first day of shooting *The Attics* he was anytime he's made a movie,

he told me. Different people, different surroundings made him nervous until he got into it after a few days on the set.

PENNY BLOOD: Discuss your collaboration with director Curtis Harrington. You lensed his final horror masterpiece *Usher* (2002).

GRAVER: I've known Curtis since I was a kid. I met him through a friend at a film festival in San Diego. So I've known Curtis through the years, but our careers went in different directions. We see each other socially all the time. I ran into him at film festivals in Europe. Curtis hadn't done a movie in about 10 years. He called me up and said he wanted to make *Usher*, a short film. He wanted to go back to his roots in experimental film. Curtis asked if I would help him and I said "sure." Next to Orson, Curtis is the most intellectual director I've ever worked with. I was happy to help out.

PENNY BLOOD: Will you also be the cinematographer on Curtis Harrington's upcoming *The Man of the Crowd*? How is that progressing?

GRAVER: Curtis is finishing the script on his second 40-minute film. This one will be more expensive than *Usher* and Curtis will need to get a cable company or somebody to step in and give him some money. Curtis wants Barbara Steele to host *The Man of the Crowd*.

PENNY BLOOD: I'd like to find out more about your participation on some of Orson Welles' lesser-known projects, such as the 10-minute *F for Fake*

trailer, *The Orson Welles Show*, *Filming 'Othello'*, *Filming 'The Trial'*, *The Golden Honeymoon*, *The Spirit of Charles Lindbergh*, *Orson Welles' Magic Show* and *Moby Dick*.

GRAVER: *Filming 'The Trial'* (1981) is a 90-minute Q&A at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Orson intended to do it like *Filming 'Othello'* with scenes from *The Trial* and other interviews added later but we never got around to it. The Munich Film Museum took all my reels and stitched them together to make a 90-minute movie — and it works! A lot of people were there in the audience that day who are successful filmmakers now. It was pretty basic camerawork. I filmed Orson quite a bit and then I'd swing around to the audience whenever they gave a big response.

Filming 'Othello' (1978) was a lengthy conversation, all shot in a hotel room in Paris. I filmed additional scenes of Orson in a gondola in Venice, but these didn't make it into the film. [Some of these Venetian scenes appear in Graver's documentary, *Working with Orson Welles*. — Ed.] The negative of the picture disappeared down in Spain. We also lost some footage of scenes of actors Michael MacLiammoir and Hilton Edwards, which were shot in Dublin. We can't screen *Filming 'Othello'* anywhere because Orson's daughter Beatrice owns the rights to *Othello* (1952) and won't let us use any clips from it.

The Golden Honeymoon, *The Spirit of Charles Lindbergh* and *Moby Dick* were straight readings. We did them in 1971 under the omnibus title *An Evening with Orson Welles* — readings of six stories told on film by Orson and then transferred to the



new up-and-coming medium of videotape. Sears department stores engaged Orson to promote their new videotape player. We shipped the filmed readings off to Sears and they gave them away to encourage people to buy TV consoles with a built-in videotape player. This was way before Betamax and VHS. It was something altogether different and quite experimental.

We worked on *Moby Dick* some more later on. Orson always had seven or eight projects going. Orson would shoot whenever he wanted to. He would call me up and say, "come on over; and we'd shoot something. He wouldn't even tell me what we were doing it for, if it was part of a grander concept or something. Orson just liked to work.

In 1979, we did *The Orson Welles Show* with guests Burt Reynolds, Angie Dickinson and the Muppets. Orson didn't have much luck selling that to the networks. Nobody bought it anywhere in the world! It's very entertaining, with magic tricks and everything in it. I can't understand why no one wanted it. Orson Welles' *Magic Show* (1985) is nowhere near completed, but all the tricks were stitched together by the Munich Film Museum people. Almost everything Orson did like that, in bits and pieces, has been assembled and is screened every two years. All the Welles scholars — the "Welles gang" — gather for these events. The last one was in Locarno, Switzerland, and the next one will be at the American Cinematheque here in Los Angeles.

On the morning of Orson's death in October 1985, we were planning to start shooting *Julius Caesar* with Orson playing all the parts himself. Two days earlier, we'd pre-lit the stage at UCLA's Theatre Arts Department.

PENNY BLOOD: Why did Orson Welles make an 11-minute trailer for *F for Fake* (1974), a film that had limited commercial potential?

GRAVER: It was something Orson just wanted to do and it was fun to make. The distributor couldn't afford to make a custom negative so we made our own. And then it wasn't shown anywhere until quite recently. [*The long trailer is an extra feature on Criterion's DVD release of F for Fake.* —Ed.]

PENNY BLOOD: Could you also enlighten us on how Welles assisted you on *Trick or Treats* (1982)?

GRAVER: I told Orson about the tricks I was going to do in the film and he gave me advice on how to set up a few gags. I gave Orson a credit because I took his ideas. I think *Trick or Treats* is too long at 90 minutes. I've taken 10 minutes out of it in my Director's Cut. Now I own the film. I have the negative.

I made *Trick or Treats* as a comedy. It's not really scary, though it was marketed as a horror film. When I made *Trick or Treats*, I called in every favor from every actor you can think of — David Carradine, Carrie Snodgrass, Steve Railsback, Peter Jason, Paul Bartel, Jillian [Kesner]. Jillian has done

some pictures for Orson — *Firecracker* (1981), *The Student Body* (1976)... I also directed Jillian in *Roots of Evil* (1992). She looks like a cross between Linda Evans and Ursula Andress. I made *Trick or Treats* for \$55,000 total in 35 mm. It took about three weeks to make the picture, because I only shot at night — from six o'clock to midnight. But during the day, I'd go to the lab, buy the lunches and snacks and get the costumes ready. All day long I worked on the movie. The whole thing was shot at Carrie Snodgrass' place, while she went to live at my house on the beach in Venice, California. I cast my son Chris in one of the lead roles. He was eight years old at the time.

I made *Trick or Treats* to make money. The distributor, who was my partner, never gave me a dime. I said to him: "How can you not make money on a \$55,000 horror movie?" He told me he had all these expenses. Then I couldn't get the guy on the phone for over a year. I've dealt with three distributors who have cheated me. In the middle of the night, they have all literally hacked up a truck, emptied their offices and driven off — gone out of business. Three times this has happened to me!

PENNY BLOOD: What was John Carradine like to work with on *Doctor Dracula* (1978) and *Sunset Cove* (1978), both directed by Al Adamson?

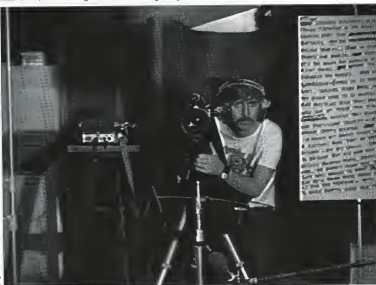
GRAVER: John was great. His big scene for *Sunset Cove* was shot in the old Bradbury Building in downtown L.A. John played a judge and he had a speech that was about 10 minutes long. He memorized the thing perfectly and knew every line. John had all that stage training and a great memory. He had terrible arthritis in his fingers so I didn't shoot his hands much, because they were all curled up. On *Doctor Dracula*, I was so fascinated by what John was doing when he wasn't doing dialogue with

Don 'Red' Barry. John was reacting a lot, so during rehearsals I'd just turn the camera on John and I got great stuff that they ended up using in the picture. John was wonderful. One-of-a-kind.

PENNY BLOOD: You assembled another amazing cast for *Evil Spirits* (1990) — Karen Black, Martine Beswick, Yvette Vickers, Holke Howell, Michael Berryman, Virginia Mayo... What's the story behind *Evil Spirits*?

GRAVER: I was very happy with *Evil Spirits*. A friend of mine, Mikel Angel, wrote it. I made *Evil Spirits* for my own company. We also did *Roots of Evil*, which we sold to Cannon Film Distributors, with Alex Cord and Charlie Dierkop, the flat-nosed actor from *The Sting* and *Police Women*.

I loved the cast in *Evil Spirits*. Virginia Mayo was great. We brought her in for a few days because she lived out of town. I just loved cooking up the scenes with her. I wanted to work with Virginia Mayo because I was in love with her as a kid. I was still in love with her when we made *Evil Spirits*! Someone suggested Arte Johnson. I didn't know him, but I knew Karen Black. In fact, I had the part of Ella Purdy written especially for her. I wanted Karen and nobody else. George Edwards brought in Yvette Vickers from *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (1958). We went theatrical with *Evil Spirits* and sold it to Showtime and laserdisc. *Evil Spirits* is about a landlady who takes in boarders. They get murdered. She buries them in her backyard and keeps their social security checks. *Evil Spirits* is based on a true story that happened in California. It's a black comedy. Imagine, Karen Black in a black comedy! All the little parts were perfectly cast too. I loved working with Michael Berryman and Holke Howell.





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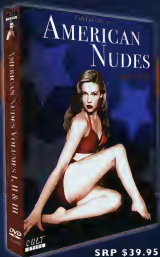
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